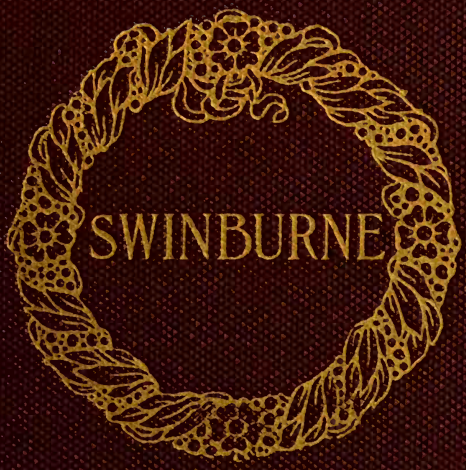
SWINBURNE

SWINBURNE'S POEMS

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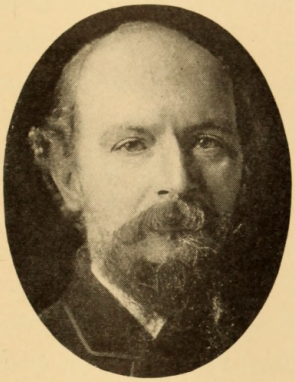
THE WORKS

OF

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE



POEMS

PHILADELPHIA
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PUBLISHERS' PREFACE

THE issuing of this edition of Swinburne in two volumes, one "Poems" and the other "Tragedies," we feel is really needed. To get the author's works before this time meant either buying the American edition in eleven volumes or collecting the English edition, in more numerous volumes, at even greater expense. The works of all the other standard poets may be had in some compact form for library use, and Swinburne surely should not be neglected. This edition, with the exception of "Rosamund," "Balen," and a few minor poems, is complete.

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POEMS AND BALLADS.

A BALLAD OF LIFE.

I FOUND in dreams a place of wind and flowers,
Full of sweet trees and color of glad grass,
In midst whereof there was
A lady clothed like summer with sweet hours,
Her beauty, fervent as a fiery moon
Made my blood burn and swoon
Like a flame rained upon.
Sorrow had filled her shaken eyelids' blue,
And her mouth's sad red heavy rose all through
Seemed sad with glad things gone.

She held a little cithern by the strings,
Shaped heartwise, strung with subtle-colored hair
Of some dead lute player
That in dead years had done delicious things.
The seven strings were named accordingly;
The first string charity,
The second tenderness,
The rest were pleasure, sorrow, sleep, and sin,
And loving kindness, that is pity's kin
And is most pitiless.

There were three men with her, each garmented
With gold and shod with gold upon the feet;
And with plucked ears of wheat.
The first man's hair was wound upon his head:
His face was red, and his mouth curled and sad;
All his gold garment had
Pale stains of dust and rust.
A riven hood was pulled across his eyes;
The token of him being upon this wise
Made for a sign of Lust.

The next was Shame, with hollow heavy face
Colored like green wood when flame kindles it.
He hath such feeble feet
They may not well endure in any place.
His face was full of grey old miseries,
And all his blood's increase
Was even increase of pain.
The last was Fear, that is akin to Death;
He is Shame's friend, and always as Shame saith
Fear answers him again.

My soul said in me; This is marvellous,
Seeing the air's face is not so delicate
Nor the sun's grace so great,
If sin and she be kin or amorous.
And seeing where maidens served her on their knees,
I bade one crave of these
To know the cause thereof.
Then Fear said: I am Pity that was dead.
And Shame said: I am Sorrow comforted.
And Lust said: I am Love.

Thereat her hands began a lute-playing
And her sweet mouth a song in a strange tongue;
And all the while she sung
There was no sound but long tears following
Long tears upon men's faces, waxen white
With extreme sad delight.
But those three following men
Became as men raised up among the dead;
Great glad mouths open, and fair cheeks made red
With child's blood come again.

Then I said: Now assuredly I see
My lady is perfect, and transfigureth
All sin and sorrow and death,
Making them fair as her own eyelids be,
Or lips wherein my whole soul's life abides;
Or as her sweet white sides
And bosom carved to kiss.
Now therefore, if her pity further me.
Doubtless for her sake all my days shall be
As righteous as she is.

Forth, ballad, and take roses in both arms,
Even till the top rose touch thee in the throat
Where the least thornprick harms;
And girdled in thy golden singing-coat,
Come thou before my lady and say this;
Borgia, thy gold hair's color burns in me,
Thy mouth makes beat my blood in feverish rhymes;
Therefore so many as these roses be,
Kiss me so many times.
Then it may be, seeing how sweet she is,
That she will stoop herself none otherwise
Than a blown vine-branch doth,
And kiss thee with soft laughter on thine eyes,
Ballad, and on thy mouth.

A BALLAD OF DEATH.

KNEEL down, fair Love, and fill thyself with tears,
Girdle thyself with sighing for a girth
Upon the sides of mirth,
Cover thy lips and eyelids, let thine ears
Be filled with rumor of people sorrowing;
Make thee soft raiment out of woven sighs
Upon the flesh to cleave,
Set pains therein and many a grievous thing,
And many sorrows after each his wise
For armlet and for gorget and for sleeve.

O Love's lute heard about the lands of death,
Left hanged upon the trees that were therein;
O Love and Time and Sin,
Three singing mouths that mourn now under breath,
Three lovers, each one evil spoken of;
O smitten lips where through this voice of mine
Came softer with her praise;
Abide a little for our lady's love.
The kisses of her mouth were more than wine,
And more than peace the passage of her days.
O Love, thou knowest if she were good to see.
O Time, thou shalt not find in any land
Till, cast out of thine hand,
The sunlight and the moonlight fail from thee,
Another woman fashioned like as this.
O Sin, thou knowest that all thy shame in her
Was made a goodly thing;
Yea, she caught Shame and shamed him with her kiss,
With her fair kiss, and lips much lovelier
Than lips of amarous roses in late spring.

By night there stood over against my bed
Queen Venus with a hood striped gold and black,
Both sides drawn fully back
From brows wherein the sad blood failed of red,
And temples drained of purple and full of death.

Her curled hair had the wave of sea-water
And the sea's gold in it.
Her eyes were as a dove's that sickeneth.
Strewn dust of gold she had shed over her,
And pearl and purple and amber on her feet.

Upon her raiment of dyed sendaline
Were painted all the secret ways of love
And covered things thereof.
That hold delight as grape-flowers hold their wine;
Red mouths of maidens and red feet of doves,
And brides that kept within the bride-chamber
Their garment of soft shame,
And weeping faces of the wearied loves
That swoon in sleep and awake wearier,
With heat of lips and hair shed out like flame.

The tears that through her eyelids fell on me
Made my own bitter where they ran between
As blood had fallen therein,
She saying; Arise, lift up thine eyes and see
If any glad thing be or any good
Now the best thing is taken forth of us;
Even she to whom all praise
Was as one flower in a great multitude,
One glorious flower of many and glorious,
One day found gracious among many days:

Even she whose handmaiden was Love—to whom
At kissing times across her stateliest bed
Kings bowed themselves and shed
Pale wine, and honey with the honeycomb,
And spikenard bruised for a burnt-offering;
Even she between whose lips the kiss became
As fire and frankincense;
Whose hair was as gold raiment on a king,
Whose eyes were as the morning purged with flame,
Whose eyelids as sweet savor issuing thence.
Then I beheld, and lo on the other side
My lady's likeness crowned and robed and dead.
Sweet still, but now not red,
Was the shut mouth whereby men lived and died.
And sweet, but emptied of the blood's blue shade,
The great curled eyelids that withheld her eyes.
And sweet, but like spoilt gold,
The weight of color in her tresses weighed.
And sweet, but as a vesture with new dyes,
The body that was clothed with love of old.

Ah! that my tears filled all her woven hair
And all the hollow bosom of her gown—
Ah! that my tears ran down
Even to the place where many kisses were,
Even where her parted breast-flowers have place,
Even where they are cloven apart—who knows not this?
Ah! the flowers cleave apart
And their sweet fills the tender interspace;
Ah! the leaves grown thereof were things to kiss
Ere their fine gold was tarnished at the heart.

Ah! in the days when God did good to me,
Each part about her was a righteous thing;
Her mouth an almsgiving,
The glory of her garments charity,
The beauty of her bosom a good deed,
In the good days when God kept sight of us;
Love lay upon her eyes,
And on that hair whereof the world takes heed:
And all her body was more virtuous
Than souls of women fashioned otherwise.

Now, ballad, gather poppies in thine hands
And sheaves of briar and many rusted sheaves
Rain-rotten in rank lands,
Waste marigold and late unhappy leaves
And grass that fades ere any of it be mown;
And when thy bosom is filled full thereof
Seek out Death's face ere the light altereth,
And say "My master that was thrall to Love
Is become thrall to Death."
Bow down before him, ballad, sigh and groan,
But make no sojourn in thy outgoing;
For haply it may be
That when thy feet return at evening
Death shall come in with thee.

LAUS VENERIS.

Asleep or waking is it? for her neck,
Kissed over close, wears yet a purple speck,
Wherein the pained blood falters and goes out;
Soft, and stung softly—fairer for a fleck.

But though my lips shut sucking on the place,
There is no vein at work upon her face;
Her eyelids are so peaceable no doubt
Deep sleep has warmed her blood through all its ways.

Lo, this is she that was the world's delight;
The old grey years were parcels of her might;
The strewings of the ways wherein she trod
Were the twain seasons of the day and night.

Lo, she was thus when her clear limbs enticed
All lips that now grow sad with kissing Christ,
Stained with blood fallen from the feet of God,
The feet and hands whereat our souls were priced.

Alas, Lord, surely thou art great and fair.
But lo her wonderfully woven hair!
And thou didst heal us with thy piteous kiss;
But see now, Lord; her mouth is lovelier.

She is right fair; what hath she done to thee?
Nay, fair Lord Christ, lift up thine eyes and see;
Had now thy mother such a lip—like this?
Thou knowest how sweet a thing it is to me.

Inside the Horsel here the air is hot;
Right little peace one hath for it, God wot;
The scented dusty daylight burns the air,
And my heart chokes me til I hear it not.

Behold, my Venus, my soul's body, lies
With my love laid upon her garment-wise,
Feeling my love in all her limbs and hair
And shed between her eyelids through her eyes.

She holds my heart in her sweet open hands
Hanging asleep; hard by her head there stands,
Crowned with gilt thorns and clothed with flesh like fire,
Love, wan as foam blown up the salt burnt sands—

Hot as the brackish waifs of yellow spume
That shift and steam—loose clot of arid fume
From the sea's panting mouth of dry desire;
There stands he, like one laboring at a loom.

The warp holds fast across; and every thread
That makes the woof up has dry specks of red;
Always the shuttle cleaves clean through, and he
Weaves with the hair of many a ruined head.

Love is not glad nor sorry, as I deem;
Laboring he dreams, and labors in the dream,
Till when the spool is finished, lo I see
His web, reeled off, curls and goes out like steam.

Night falls like fire; the heavy lights run low,
And as they drop, my blood and body so

Shake as the flame shakes, full of days and hours
That sleep not neither weep they as they go.

Ah yet would God this flesh of mine might be
Where air might wash and long leaves cover me,
Where tides of grass break into foam of flowers,
Or where the wind's feet shine along the sea.

Ah yet would God that stems and roots were bred
Out of my weary body and my head,
That sleep were sealed upon me with a seal,
And I were as the least of all his dead.

Would God my blood were dew to feed the grass,
Mine ears made deaf and mine eyes blind as glass,
My body broken as a turning wheel,
And my mouth stricken ere it saith Alas!

Ah God, that love were as a flower or flame,
That life were as the naming of a name,
That death were not more pitiful than desire,
That these things were not one thing and the same!

Behold now, surely somewhere there is death:
For each man hath some space of years, he saith.
A little space of time ere time expire,
A little day, a little way of breath.

And lo, between the sundawn and the sun,
His day's work and his night's work are undone;
And lo, between the nightfall and the light,
He is not, and none knoweth of such an one.

Ah God, that I were as all souls that be,
As any herb or leaf of any tree,
As men that toil through hours of laboring night,
As bones of men under the deep sharp sea.

Outside it must be winter among men;
For at the gold bars of the gates again
I heard all night and all the hours of it,
The wind's wet wings and fingers drip with rain.

Knights gather, riding sharp for cold; I know
The ways and woods are strangled with the snow;
And with short song the maidens spin and sit
Until Christ's birthnight, lily-like, arow.

The scent and shadow shed about me make
The very soul in all my senses ache;
The hot hard night is fed upon my breath,
And sleep beholds me from afar awake.

Alas, but surely where the hills grow deep,
Or where the wild ways of the sea are steep,
Or in strange places somewhere there is death,
And on death's face the scattered hair of sleep.

There lover-like with lips and limbs that meet
They lie, they pluck sweet fruit of life and eat;
But me the hot and hungry days devour,
And in my mouth no fruit of theirs is sweet.

No fruit of theirs, but fruit of my desire,
For her love's sake whose lips through mine respire;
Her eyelids on her eyes like flower on flower,
Mine eyelids on mine eyes like fire on fire.

So lie we, not as sleep that lies by death,
With heavy kisses and with happy breath;
Not as man lies by woman, when the bride
Laughs low for love's sake and the words he saith.

For she lies, laughing low with love; she lies
And turns his kisses on her lips to sighs,
To sighing sound of lips unsatisfied,
And the sweet tears are tender with her eyes.

Ah, not as they, but as the souls that were

Slain in the old time, having found her fair;
Who, sleeping with her lips upon their eyes,
Heard sudden serpents hiss across her hair.

Their blood runs round the roots of time like rain:
She casts them forth and gathers them again;
With nerve and bone she weaves and multiplies
Exceeding pleasure out of extreme pain.

Her little chambers drip with flower-like red,
Her girdles, and the chaplets of her head,
Her armlets and her anklets; with her feet,
She tramples all that winepress of the dead.

Her gateways smoke with fume of flowers and fires,
With loves burnt out and unassuaged desires;
Between her lips the steam of them is sweet,
The langor in her ears of many lyres.

Her beds are full of perfume and sad sound,
Her doors are made with music and barred round
With sighing and with laughter and with tears,
With tears whereby strong souls of men are bound.

There is the knight Adonis that was slain,
With flesh and blood she chains him for a chain;
The body and the spirit in her ears
Cry, for her lips divide him vein by vein.

Yea, all she slayeth; yea, every man save me;
Me, love, thy lover that must cleave to thee
Till the ending of the days and ways of earth,
The shaking of the sources of the sea.

Me, most forsaken of all souls that fell;
Me, satiated with things insatiable;
Me, for whose sake the extreme hell makes mirth,
Yea, laughter kindles at the heart of hell.

Alas thy beauty! for thy mouth's sweet sake
My soul is bitter to me, my limbs quake
As water as the flesh of men that weep,
As their heart's vein whose heart goes nigh to break.

Ah God, that sleep with flower-sweet finger-tips
Would crush the fruit of death upon my lips;
Ah, God, that death would tread the grapes of sleep
And wring their juice upon me as it drips.

There is no change of cheer for many days,
But change of chimes high up in the air, that sways
Rung by the running fingers of the wind;
And singing sorrows heard on hidden ways.

Day smiteth day in twain, night sundereth night,
And on mine eyes the dark sits as the light;
Yea, Lord, thou knowest I know not, having sinned,
If heaven be clean or unclean in thy sight.

Yea, as if earth were sprinkled over me,
Such chafed harsh earth as chokes a sandy sea,
Each pore doth yearn, and the dried blood thereof
Gasps by sick fits, my heart swims heavily

There is a feverish famine in my veins;
Below her bosom, where a crushed grape stains
The white and blue, there my lips caught and clove
An hour since, and what mark of me remains?

I dare not always touch her, lest the kiss
Leave my lips charred. Yea, Lord, a little bliss,
Brief bitter bliss, one hath for a great sin;
Nathless thou knowest how sweet a thing it is.

Sin, is it sin whereby men's souls are thrust
Into the pit? yet had I a good trust
To save my soul before it slipped therein,
Trod under by the fire-shod feet of lust.

For if mine eyes fail and my soul takes breath,
I look between the iron sides of death
Into sad hell where all sweet love hath end,
All but the pain that never finisheth.

There are the naked faces of great kings,
The singing folk with all their lute-playings;
There when one cometh he shall have to friend
The grave that covets and the worm that clings.

There sit the knights that were so great of hand,
The ladies that were queens of fair green land,
Grown grey and black now, brought unto the dust,
Soiled, without raiment, clad about with sand.

There is one end for all of them; they sit
Naked and sad, they drink the dregs of it,
Trodden as grapes in the wine-press of lust,
Trampled and trodden by the fiery feet.

I see the marvellous mouth whereby there fell
Cities and people whom the gods loved well,
Yet for her sake on them the fire gat hold,
And for their sakes on her the fire of hell.

And softer than the Egyptian lote-leaf is,
The queen whose face was worth the world to kiss,
Wearing at breast a suckling snake of gold;
And large pale lips of strong Semiramis.

Curled like a tiger's that curl back to feed;
Red only where the last kiss made them bleed;
Her hair most thick with many a carven gem,
Deep in the mane, great-chested, like a steed.

Yea, with red sin the faces of them shine;
But in all these there was no sin like mine;
No, not in all the strange great sins of them
That made the wine-press froth and foam with wine.

For I was of Christ's choosing, I God's knight,
No blinkard heathen stumbling for scant light;
I can well see, for all the dusty days
Gone past, the clean great time of goodly fight.

I smell the breathing battle sharp with blows,
With shriek of shafts and snapping short of bows;
The fair pure sword smites out in subtle ways,
Sounds and long lights are shed between the rows

Of beautiful mailed men; the edged light slips,
Most like a snake that takes short breath and dips
Sharp from the beautifully bending head,
With all its gracious body lithe as lips

That curl in touching you; right in this wise
My sword doth, seeming fire in mine own eyes,
Leaving all colors in them brown and red
And flecked with death; then the keen breaths like sighs,

The caught-up choked dry laughters following them,
When all the fighting face is grown a flame
For pleasure, and the pulse that stuns the ears,
And the heart's gladness of the goodly game.

Let me think yet a little; I do know
These things were sweet, but sweet such years ago,
Their savor is all turned now into tears;
Yea, ten years since, where the blue ripples blow,

The blue curled eddies of the blowing Rhine,
I felt the sharp wind shaking grass and vine

Touch my blood, too, and sting me with delight
Through all this waste and weary body of mine

That never feels clear air; right gladly then
I rode alone, a great way off my men,
And heard the chiming bridle smite and smite.
And gave each rhyme thereof some rhyme again,

Till my song shifted to that iron one;
Seeing there rode up between me and the sun
Some certain of my foe's men, for his three
White wolves across their painted coats did run.

The first red-bearded, with square cheeks—alack,
I made my knave's blood turn his beard to black;
The slaying of him was a joy to see:
Perchance too, when at night he came not back,

Some woman fell a-weeping, whom this thief
Would beat when he had drunken; yet small grief
Hath any for the ridding of such knaves;
Yea, if one wept, I doubt her teen was brief.

This bitter love is sorrow in all lands,
Draining of eyelids, wringing of drenched hands,
Sighing of hearts and filling up of graves;
A sign across the head of the world he stands,

As one that hath a plague-mark on his brows;
Dust and spilt blood do track him to his house
Down under earth; sweet smells of lip and cheek,
Like a sweet snake's breath made more poisonous

With chewing of some perfumed deadly grass,
Are shed all round his passage if he pass,
And their quenched savor leaves the whole soul weak,
Sick with keen guessing whence the perfume was.

As one who hidden in deep sedge and reeds
Smells the rare scent made where a panther feeds,
And tracking ever slotwise the warm smell
Is snapped upon by the sweet mouth and bleeds,

His head far down the hot sweet throat of her—
So one tracks love, whose breath is deadlier,
And lo, one springé and you are fast in hell,
Fast as the gin's grip of a wayfarer.

I think now, as the heavy hours decease
One after one, and bitter thoughts increase
One upon one, of all sweet finished things;
The breaking of the battle; the long peace

Wherein we sat clothed softly, each man's hair
Crowned with green leaves beneath white hoods of vair;
The sounds of sharp spears at great tourneyings,
And noise of singing in the late sweet air.

I sang of love too, knowing nought thereof:
"Sweeter," I said, "the little laugh of love
Than tears out of the eyes of Magdalen,
Or any fallen feather of the Dove.

"The broken little laugh that spoils a kiss,
The ache of purple pulses, and the bliss
Of blinded eyelids that expand again—
Love draws them open with those lips of his,

"Lips that cling hard till the kissed face has grown
Of one same fire and color with their own;
Then ere one sleep, appeased with sacrifice,
Where his lips wounded, there his lips atone."

I sang these things long since and knew them not:

"Lo, here is love, or there is love, God wot,
This man and that finds favor in his eyes,"
I said, "but I, what guerdon have I got?

"The dust of praise that is blown everywhere
In all men's faces with the common air;
The bay-leaf that wants chafing to be sweet
Before they wind it in a singer's hair."

So that one dawn I rode forth sorrowing;
I had no hope but of some evil thing,
And so rode slowly past the windy wheat,
And past the vineyard and the water-spring,

Up to the Horsel. A great elder-tree
Held back its heaps of flowers to let me see
The ripe tall grass, and one that walked therein,
Naked, with hair shed over to the knee.

She walked between the blossom and the grass;
I knew the beauty of her, what she was,
The beauty of her body and her sin,
And in my flesh the sin of hers, alas!

Alas! for sorrow is all the end of this.
O sad kissed mouth, how sorrowful it is!
O breast whereat some suckling sorrow clings,
Red with the bitter blossom of a kiss!

Ah, with blind lips I felt for you, and found
About my neck your hands and hair enwound,
The hands that stifle and the hair that stings,
I felt them fasten sharply without sound.

Yea, for my sin I had great store of bliss
Rise up, make answer for me, let thy kiss
Seal my lips hard from speaking of my sin,
Lest one go mad to hear how sweet it is.

Yet I waxed faint with fume of barren bowers,
And murmuring of the heavy-headed hours;
And let the dove's beak fret and peck within
My lips in vain, and Love shed fruitless flowers.

So that God looked upon me when your hands
Were hot about me; yea, God brake my bands
To save my soul alive, and I came forth
Like a man blind and naked in strange lands

That hears men laugh and weep, and knows not whence
Nor wherefore, but is broken in his sense;
Howbeit I met folk riding from the north
Towards Rome, to purge them of their souls' offence.

And rode with them, and spake to none; the day
Stunned me like lights upon some wizard way,
And ate like fire mine eyes and mine eyesight;
So rode I, hearing all these chant and pray,

And marvelled; till before us rose and fell
White cursed hills, like outer skirts of hell
Seen where men's eyes look through the day to night,
Like a jagged shell's lips, harsh, untunable,

Blown in between by devils' wrangling breath;
Nathless we won well past that hell and death,
Down to the sweet land where all airs are good,
Even unto Rome where God's grace tarrieth.

Then came each man and worshipped at his knees
Who in the Lord God's likeness bears the keys
To bind or loose, and called on Christ's shed blood,
And so the sweet-souled father gave him ease.

But when I came I fell down at his feet,
Saying, "Father, though the Lord's blood be right sweet,

The spot it takes not off the panther's skin,
Nor shall an Ethiop's stain be bleached with it.

"Lo, I have sinned and have spat out at God,
Wherefore his hand is heavier and his rod
More sharp because of mine exceeding sin,
And all his raiment redder than bright blood

"Before mine eyes; yea, for my sake I wot
The heat of hell is waxen seven times hot
Through my great sin." Then spake he some sweet word,
Giving me cheer; which thing availed me not;

Yea, scarce I wist if such indeed were said;
For when I ceased—lo, as one newly dead
Who hears a great cry out of hell, I heard
The crying of his voice across my head.

"Until this dry shred staff, that hath no whit
Of leaf nor bark, bear blossom and smell sweet,
Seek thou not any mercy in God's sight
For so long shalt thou be cast out from it."

Yea, what if dried-up stems wax red and green,
Shall that thing be which is not nor has been?
Yea, what if sapless bark was green and white,
Shall any good fruit grow upon my sin?

Nay, though sweet fruit were plucked of a dry tree,
And though men drew sweet waters of the sea,
There should not grow sweet leaves on this dead stem,
This waste wan body and shaken soul of me.

Yea, though God search it warily enough,
There is not one sound thing in all thereof;
Though he search all my veins through, searching them
He shall find nothing whole therein but love.

For I came home right heavy, with small cheer,
And lo my love, mine own soul's heart, more dear
Than mine own soul, more beautiful than God,
Who hath my being between the hands of her—

Fair still, but fair for no man saving me,
As when she came out of the naked sea
Making the foam as fire whereon she trod,
And as the inner flower of fire was she.

Yea, she laid hold upon me, and her mouth
Clove unto mine as soul to body doth,
And, laughing, made her lips luxurious;
Her hair had smells of all the sunburnt south,

Strange spice and flower, strange savor of crushed fruit
And perfume the swart kings tread underfoot
For pleasure when their minds wax amorous,
Charred frankincense and grated sandalroot.

And I forgot fear and all weary things,
All ended prayers and perished thanksgivings,
Feeling her face with all her eager hair
Cleave to me, clinging as a fire that clings

To the body and to the raiment, burning them;
As after death I know that such-like flame
Shall cleave to me for ever; yea, what care,
Albeit I burn then, having felt the same?

Ah love, there is no better life than this;
To have known love, how bitter a thing it is,
And afterward be cast out of God's sight;
Yea, these that know not, shall they have such bliss

High up in barren heaven before his face
As we twain in the heavy-hearted place,
Remembering love and all the dead delight,
And all that time was sweet with for a space?

For till the thunder in the trumpet be,
Soul may divide from body, but not we
One from another; I ho'd thee with my hand,
I let mine eyes have all their will of thee,
I seal myself upon thee with my might,
Abiding alway out of all men's sight
Until God loosen over sea and land
The thunder of the trumpets of the night.

EXPLICIT LAUS VENERIS

PHÆDRA.

HIPPOLYTUS; PHÆDRA; CHORUS OF TRŒZENIAN WOMEN.

HIPPOLYTUS.

LAY not thine hand upon me; let me go;
Take off thine eyes that put the gods to shame;
What, wilt thou turn my loathing to thy death?

PHÆDRA.

Nay, I will never loosen hold nor breathe
Till thou have slain me; godlike for great brows
Thou art, and thewed as gods are, with clear hair:
Draw now thy sword and smite me as thou art god,
For verily I am smitten of other gods,
Why not of thee?

CHORUS.

O queen, take heed of words;
Why wilt thou eat the husk of evil speech?
Wear wisdom for that veil about thy head
And goodness for the binding of thy brows.

PHÆDRA.

Nay, but this god hath cause enow to smite;
If he will slay me, baring breast and throat,
I lean toward the stroke with silent mouth
And a great heart. Come, take thy sword and slay;
Let me not starve between desire and death,
But send me on my way with glad wet lips;
For in the vein-drawn ashen-colored palm
Death's hollow hand holds water of sweet draught
To dip and slake dried mouths at, as a deer
Specked red from thorns laps deep and loses pain.
Yea, if my mine own blood ran upon my mouth,
I would drink that. Nay, but be swift with me;
Set thy sword here between the girdle and breast
For I shall grow a poison if I live.
Are not my cheeks as grass, my body pale,
And my breath like a dying poisoned man's?
O whatsoever of godlike names thou be,
By thy chief name I charge thee, thou strong god,
And bid thee slay me. Strike, up to the gold,
Up to the hand-grip of the hilt; strike here;
For I am Cretan of my birth; strike now;
For I am Theseus' wife; stab up to the rims,
I am born daughter to Pasiphae.
See thou spare not for greatness of my blood,
Nor for the shining letters of my name:
Make thy sword sure inside thine hand and smite,
For the bright writing of my name is black,
And I am sick with hating the sweet sun.

HIPPOLYTUS

Let not this woman wail and cleave to me,
That am no part of the god's wrath with her;
Loose ye her hands from me lest she take hurt.

CHORUS.

Lady, this speech and majesty are twain;
Pure shame is of one counsel with the gods.

HIPPOLYTUS.

Man is as beast when shame stands off from him.

PHÆDRA.

Man, what have I to do with shame or thee?
I am not of one counsel with the gods.
I am their kin, I have strange blood in me.
I am not of their likeness nor of thine:
My veins are mixed, and therefore am I mad,
Yea therefore chafe and turn on mine own flesh,
Half a woman made with half a god.
But thou wast hewn out of an iron womb
And fed with molten mother-snow for milk.
A sword was nurse of thine; Hippolyta,
That had the spear to father, and the axe
To bridesman, and wet blood of sword-slain men
For wedding-water out of a noble well,
Even she did bear thee, thinking of a sword,
And thou wast made a man mistakingly.
Nay, for I love thee, I will have thy hands,
Nay, for I will not loose thee, thou art sweet,
Thou art my son, I am thy father's wife,
I ache toward thee with a bridal blood,
The pulse is heavy in all my married veins,
My whole face beats, I will feed full of thee,
My body is empty of ease, I will be fed,
I am burnt to the bone with love, thou shalt not go,
I am heartsick, and mine eyelids prick mine eyes,
Thou shalt not sleep nor eat nor say a word
Till thou hast slain me. I am not good to live.

CHORUS.

This is an evil born with all its teeth,
When love is cast out of the bound of love.

HIPPOLYTUS.

There is no hate that is so hateworthy.

PHÆDRA.

I pray thee turn that hate of thine my way,
I hate not it nor anything of thine.
Lo, maidens, how he burns about the brow,
And draws the chafing sword-strap down his hand.
What wilt thou do? wilt thou be worse than death?
Be but as sweet as is the bitterest,
The most dispiteous out of all the gods,
I am well pleased. Lo, do I crave so much?
I do but bid thee be unmerciful,
Even the one thing thou art. Pity me not:
Thou wert not quick to pity. Think of me
As of a thing thy hounds are keen upon
In the wet woods between the windy ways,
And slay me for a spoil. This body of mine
Is worth a wild beasts fell or hide of hair,
And spotted deeper than a panther's grain.
I were but dead if thou wert pure indeed;
I pray thee by thy cold green holy crown
And by the fillet-leaves of Artemis.
Nay, but thou wilt not. Death is not like thee,
Albeit men hold him worst of all the gods.
For of all gods Death only loves not gifts,*
Nor with burnt-offering nor blood-sacrifice
Shalt thou do aught to get thee grace of him;
He will have nought of altar and altar-song,
And from him only of all the lords in heaven
Persuasion turns a sweet averted mouth.
But thou art worse: from thee with baffled breath
Back on my lips my prayer falls like a blow,
And beats upon them, dumb. What shall I say?
There is no word I can compel thee with
To do me good and slay me. But take heed;
I say, be wary; look between thy feet,
Lest a snare take them though the ground be good.

HIPPOLYTUS.

Shame may do most where fear is found most weak:

* Æsch. Fr. Niobe :—

μόνος θεῶν γὰρ θάνατος οὐ δώρων ἐρᾷ, κ τ. λ.

That which for shame's sake yet I have not done,
Shall it be done for fears? Take thine own way;
Better the foot slip than the whole soul swerve.

PHÆDRA.

The man is choice and exquisite of mouth;
Yet in the end a curse shall curdle it.

CHORUS.

He goes with cloak upgathered to the lip,
Holding his eye as with some ill in sight.

PHÆDRA.

A bitter ill he hath i' the way thereof,
And it shall burn the sight out as with fire.

CHORUS.

Speak no such word whereto mischance is kin.

PHÆDRA.

Out of my heart and by fate's leave I speak.

CHORUS.

Set not thy heart to follow after fate.

PHÆDRA.

O women, O sweet people of this land,
O goodly city and pleasant ways thereof,
And woods with pasturing grass and great well-heads,
And hills with light and night between your leaves,
And winds with sound and silence in your lips,
And earth and water and all immortal things,
I take you to my witness what I am.
There is a god about me like as fire,
Sprung whence, who knoweth, or who hath heart to say?
A god more strong than whom slain beasts can soothe,
Or honey, or any spilth of blood-like wine,
Nor shall one please him with a whitened brow
Nor wheat nor wool nor aught of plaited leaf.
For like my mother am I stung and slain,
And round my cheeks have such red malady
And on my lips such fire and foam as hers.
This is that Atè out of Amathus
That breeds up death and gives it one for love.
She hath slain mercy, and for dead mercy's sake
(Being frighted with this sister that was slain)
Flees from before her fearful-footed shame,
And will not bear the bending of her brows
And long soft arrows flown from under them
As from bows bent. Desire flows out of her
As out of lips doth speech: and over her
Shines fire, and round her and beneath her fire.
She hath sown pain and plague in all our house,
Love loathed of love, and mates unmatchable,
Wild wedlock, and the lusts that bleat or low,
And marriage-fodder snuffed about of kine.
Lo how the heifer runs with leaping flank
Sleek under shaggy and speckled lies of hair,
And chews a horrible lip, and with harsh tongue
Laps alien froth and licks a loathlier mouth.
Alas, a foul first steam of trodden tares,
And fouler of these late grapes underfoot.
A bitter way of waves and clean-cut foam
Over the sad road of sonorous sea
The high gods gave king Theseus for no love,
Nay, but for love, yet to no loving end.
Alas the long thwarts and the fervent oars,
And blown hard sails that straightened the scant rope!
There were no strong pools in the hollow sea
To drag at them and suck down side and beak,
No wind to catch them in the teeth and hair,
No shoal, no shallow among the roaring reefs,
No gulf whereout the straining tides throw spars,
No surf where white bones twist like whirled white fire.

But like to death he came with death, and sought
And slew and spoiled and gat him that he would.
For death, for marriage, and for child-getting,
I set my curse against him as a sword;
Yea, and the severed half thereof I leave
Pittheus, because he slew not (when that face
Was tender, and the life still soft in it)
The small swathed child, but bred him for my fate.
I would I had been the first that took her death
Out from between wet hoofs and reddened teeth,
Splashed horns, fierce fetlocks of the brother bull!
For now shall I take death a deadlier way;
Gathering it up between the feet of love
Or off the knees of murder reaching it.

THE TRIUMPH OF TIME.

BEFORE our lives divide for ever,
While time is with us and hands are free,
(Time, swift to fasten and swift to sever
Hand from hand, as we stand by the sea)
I will say no word that a man might say
Whose whole life's love goes down in a day;
For this could never have been; and never,
Though the gods and the years relent, shall be.

Is it worth a tear, is it worth an hour,
To think of things that are well outworn?
Of fruitless husk and fugitive flower,
The dream foregone and the deed forborne?
Though joy be done with and grief be vain,
Time shall not sever us wholly in twain;
Earth is not spoilt for a single shower;
But the rain has ruined the ungrown corn.

It will grow not again, this fruit of my heart,
Smitten with sunbeams, ruined with rain.
The singing seasons divide and depart
Winter and summer depart in twain.
It will grow not again, it is ruined at root,
The bloodlike blossom, the dull red fruit;
Though the heart yet sickens, the lips yet smart,
With sullen savor of poisonous pain.

I have given no man of my fruit to eat;
I trod the grapes, I have drunken the wine.
Had you eaten and drunken and found it sweet,
This wild new growth of the corn and vine,
This wine and bread without lees or leaven.
We had grown as gods, as the gods in heaven,
Souls fair to look upon, goodly to greet,
One splendid spirit, your soul and mine.

In the change of years, in the coil of things
In the clamor and rumor of life to be
We, drinking love as the furthest springs
Covered with love at a covering tree,
We had grown as gods, as the gods above,
Filled from the heart to the lips with love,
Held fast in his hands, clothed warm with his wings,
O love, my love had you loved but me!

We had stood as the sure stars stand, and moved
As the moon moves, loving the world; and seen
Grief collapse as a thing disproved,
Death consume as a thing unclean,
Twain halves of a perfect heart, made fast,
Soul to soul while the years fell past;

Had you loved me once, as you have not loved;
Had the chance been with us that has not been.

I have put my days and dreams out of mind,
Days that are over, dreams that are done.
Though we seek life through, we shall surely find
There is none of them clear to us now, not one.
But clear are these things; the grass and the sand,
Where, sure as the eyes reach, ever at hand,
With lips wide open and face burnt blind,
The strong sea-daisies feast on the sun.

The low downs lean to the sea; the stream,
One loose thin pulseless tremulous vein,
Rapid and vivid and dumb as a dream,
Works downward, sick of the sun and the rain;
No wind is rough with the rank rare flowers;
The sweet sea, mother of loves and hours,
Shudders and shines as the grey winds gleam,
Turning her smile to a fugitive pain.

Mother of loves that are swift to fade,
Mother of mutable winds and hours.
A barren mother, a mother-maid,
Cold and clean as her faint salt flowers.
I would we twain were even as she,
Lost in the night and the light of the sea,
Where faint sounds falter and wan beams wade,
Break, and are broken, and shed into showers.

The loves and hours of the life of a man,
They are swift and sad, being born of the sea.
Hours that rejoice and regret for a span,
Born with a man's breath, mortal as he;
Loves that are lost ere they come to birth,
Weeds of the wave, without fruit upon earth.
I lose what I long for, save what I can,
My love, my love, and no love for me!

It is not much that a man can save
On the sands of life, in the straits of time,
Who swims in sight of the great third wave
That never a swimmer shall cross or climb.
Some waif washed up with the strays and spars
That ebb-tide shows to the shore and the stars;
Weed from the water, grass from a grave.
A broken blossom, a ruined rhyme,

There will no man do for your sake, I think,
What I would have done for the least word said.
I had wrung life dry for your lips to drink,
Broken it up for your daily bread:
Body for body and blood for blood,
As the flow of the full sea risen to flood
That yearns and trembles before it sink,
I had given, and lain down for you, glad and dead.

Yea, hope at highest and all her fruit,
And time at fullest and all his dower,
I had given you surely, and life to boot,
Were we once made one for a single hour.
But now, you are twain, you are cloven apart,
Flesh of his flesh, but heart of my heart;
And deep in one is the bitter root,
And sweet for one is the lifelong flower.

To have died if you cared I should die for you, clung
To my life if you bade me, played my part
As it pleased you—these were the thoughts that stung,
The dreams that smote with a keener dart
Than shafts of love or arrows of death;
These were but as fire is, dust or breath,
Or poisonous foam on the tender tongue
Of the little snakes that eat my heart.

I wish we were dead together to-day,
Lost sight of, hidden away out of sight,
Clasped and clothed in the cloven clay,
Out of the world's way, out of the light,
Out of the ages of worldly weather,
Forgotten of all men altogether,
As the world's first dead, taken wholly away.
Made one with death, filled full of the night.

How we should slumber, how we should sleep,
Far in the dark with the dreams and the dews!
And dreaming, grow to each other, and weep,
Laugh low, live softly, murmur and muse;
Yea, and it may be, struck through by the dream,
Feel the dust quicken and quiver, and seem
Alive as of old to the lips, and leap
Spirit to spirit as lovers use.

Sick dreams and sad of a dull delight;
For what shall it profit when men are dead
To have dreamed, to have loved with the whole soul's might,
To have looked for day when the day was fled?
Let come what will, there is one thing worth,
To have had fair love in the life upon earth:
To have held love safe till the day grew night,
While skies had color and lips were red.

Would I lose you now? would I take you then,
If I lose you now that my heart has need?
And come what may after death to men,
What thing worth this will the dead years breed?
Lose life, lose all; but at least I know,
O sweet life's love, having loved you so,
Had I reached you on earth, I should lose not again,
In death nor life, nor in dream or deed.

Yea, I know this well: were you once sealed mine,
Mine in the blood's beat, mine in the breath,
Mixed into me as honey in wine,
Not time that sayeth and gainsayeth,
Nor all strong things had severed us then;
Not wrath of gods, nor wisdom of men,
Nor all things earthly, nor all divine,
Nor joy nor sorrow, nor life nor death.

I had grown pure as the dawn and the dew,
You had grown strong as the sun or the sea.
But none shall triumph a whole life through:
For death is one, and the fates are three.
At the door of life, by the gate of breath,
There are worse things waiting for men than death;
Death could not sever my soul and you,
As these have severed your soul from me.

You have chosen and clung to the chance they sent you,
Life sweet as perfume and pure as prayer.
But will it not one day in heaven repent you?
Will they solace you wholly, the days that were?
Will you lift up your eyes between sadness and bliss,
Meet mine, and see where the great love is,
And tremble and turn and be changed? Content you;
The gate is strait; I shall not be there.

But you, had you chosen, had you stretched hand,
Had you seen good such a thing were done,
I too might have stood with the souls that stand
In the sun's sight, clothed with the light of the sun;
But who now on earth need care how I live?
Have the high gods anything left to give,
Save dust and laurels and gold and sand?
Which gifts are goodly; but I will none.

O all fair lovers about the world,
There is none of you, none, that shall comfort me.
My thoughts are as dead things, wrecked and whirled
Round and round in a gulf of the sea;
And still, through the sound and the straining stream,
Through the coil and chafe, they gleam in a dream,
The bright fine lips so cruelly curled,
And strange swift eyes where the soul sits free.

Free, without pity, withheld from woe,
Ignorant; fair as the eyes are fair.
Would I have you change now, change at a blow,
Startled and stricken, awake and aware?

Yea, if I could, would I have you see
My very love of you filling me,
And know my soul to the quick. as I know
The likeness and look of your throat and hair?

I shall not change you. Nay, though I might,
Would I change my sweet one love with a word?
I had rather your hair should change in a night,
Clear now as the plume of a black bright bird;
Your face fail suddenly, cease, turn grey,
Die as a leaf that dies in a day.
I will keep my soul in a place out of sight,
Far off, where the pulse of it is not heard.

Far off it walks, in a bleak blown space,
Full of the sound of the sorrow of years.
I have woven a veil for the weeping face,
Whose lips have drunken the wine of tears;
I have found a way for the failing feet,
A place for slumber and sorrow to meet;
There is no rumor about the place,
Nor light, nor any that sees or hears.

I have hidden my soul out of sight, and said
"Let none take pity upon thee, none
Comfort thy crying: for lo, thou art dead
Lie still now, safe out of sight of the sun.
Have I not built thee a grave, and wrought
Thy grave-clothes on thee of grievous thought,
With soft spun verses and tears unshed,
And sweet light visions of things undone?

"I have given thee garments and balm and myrrh,
And gold, and beautiful burial things.
But thou, be at peace now, make no stir;
Is not thy grave as a royal king s?
Fret not thyself though the end were sore;
Sleep, be patient, vex me no more.
Sleep: what hast thou to do with her?
The eyes that weep, with the mouth that sings?"

Where the dead red leaves of the years lie rotten,
The cold old crimes and the deeds thrown by,
The misconceived and the misbegotten,
I would find a sin to do ere I die,
Sure to dissolve and destroy me all through,
That would set you higher in heaven, serve you
And leave you happy, when clean forgotten,
As a dead man out of mind, am I.

Your lithe hands draw me, your face burns through me,
I am swift to follow you, keen to see;
But love lacks might to redeem or undo me,
As I have been, I know I shall surely be,
"What should such fellows as I do?" Nay,
My part were worse if I chose to play;
For the worst is this after all; if they knew me,
Not a soul upon earth would pity me.

And I play not for pity of these; but you,
If you saw with your soul what man am I,
You would praise me at least that my soul all through
Clove to you, loathing the lives that lie;
The souls and lips that are bought and sold,
The smiles of silver and kisses of gold,
The lapdog loves that whine as they chew,
The little lovers that curse and cry.

There are fairer women, I hear; that may be.
But I, that I love you and find you fair,
Who are more than fair in my eyes if they be,
Do the high gods know or the great gods care?
Though the swords in my heart for one were seven,
Would the iron hollow of doubtful heaven,
That knows not itself whether night-time or day be,
Reverberate words and a foolish prayer?

I will go back to the great sweet mother,
Mother and lover of men, the sea.
I will go down to her, I and none other,
Close with her, kiss her and mix her with me;
Cling to her, strive with her, hold her fast;
O fair white mother, in days long past
Born without sister, born without brother,
Set free my soul as thy soul is free.

O fair green-girdled mother of mine,
Sea, that art clothed with the sun and the rain,
Thy sweet hard kisses are strong like wine,
Thy large embraces are keen like pain.
Save me and hide me with all thy waves,
Find me one grave of thy thousand graves,
Those pure cold populous graves of thine,
Wrought without hand in a world without stain.

I shall sleep, and move with the moving ships,
Change as the winds change, veer in the tide;
My lips will feast on the foam of thy lips,
I shall rise with thy rising, with thee subside;
Sleep, and not know if she be, if she were,
Filled full with life to the eyes and hair,
As a rose is fulfilled to the roseleaf tips
With splendid summer and perfume and pride.

This woven raiment of nights and days,
Were it once cast off and unwound from me,
Naked and glad would I walk in thy ways,
Alive and aware of thy ways and thee;
Clear of the whole world, hidden at home,
Clothed with the green and crowned with the foam,
A pulse of the life of thy straits and bays,
A vein in the heart of the streams of the sea.

Fair mother, fed with the lives of men,
Thou art subtle and cruel of heart, men say
Thou hast taken, and shalt not render again;
Thou art full of thy dead, and cold as they.
But death is the worst that comes of thee;
Thou art fed with our dead, O mother, O sea,
But when hast thou fed on our hearts? or when,
Having given us love, hast thou taken away?

O tender-hearted, O perfect lover,
Thy lips are bitter, and sweet thine heart.
The hopes that hurt and the dreams that hover,
Shall they not vanish away and apart?
But thou, thou art sure, thou art older than earth;
Thou art strong for death and fruitful of birth;
Thy depths conceal and thy gulfs discover;
From the first thou wert; in the end thou art.

And grief shall endure not for ever, I know.
As things that are not shall these things be;
We shall live through seasons of sun and of snow,
And none be grievous as this to me.
We shall hear, as one in a trance that hears,
The sound of time, the rhyme of the years,
Wrecked hope and passionate pain will grow
As tender things of a spring-tide sea

Sea-fruit that swings in the waves that hiss,
Drowned gold and purple and royal rings.
And all time past, was it all for this?
Times unforgotten, and treasures of things?
Swift years of liking, and sweet long laughter,
That wist not well of the years thereafter
Till love woke, smitten at heart by a kiss,
With lips that trembled and trailing wings?

There lived a singer in France of old,
By the tideless dolorous midland sea.
In a land of sand and ruin and gold
There shone one woman, and none but she.
And finding life for her love's sake fail,
Being fain to see her, he bade set sail,
Touched land, and saw her as life grew cold,
And praised God, seeing; and so died he.

Died, praising God for his gift and grace:
For she bowed down to him weeping, and said
"Live;" and her tears were shed on his face
Or ever the life in his face was shed.
The sharp tears fell through her hair, and stung

Once, and her close lips touched him and clung
Once, and grew one with his lips for a space;
And so drew back, and the man was dead.

O brother, the gods were good to you.
Sleep, and be glad while the world endures.
Be well content as the years wear through;
Give thanks for life, and the loves and lures;
Give thanks for life, O brother, and death,
For the sweet last sound of her feet, her breath,
For gifts she gave you, gracious and few,
Tears and kisses, that lady of yours.

Rest and be glad of the gods; but I,
How shall I praise them, or how take rest?
There is not room under all the sky
For me that know not of worst or best,
Dream or desire of the days before,
Sweet things or bitterness, any more.
Love will not come to me now though I die,
As love came close to you, breast to breast.

I shall never be friends again with roses;
I shall loathe sweet tunes, where a note grown strong
Relents and recoils, and climbs and closes,
As a wave of the sea turned back by song.

There are sounds where the soul's delight takes fire,
Face to face with its own desire;
A delight that rebels, a desire that reposes,
I shall hate sweet music my whole life long.

The pulse of war and passion of wonder,
The heavens that murmur, the sounds that shine,
The stars that sing and the loves that thunder,
The music burning at heart like wine,
An armed archangel whose hands raise up
All senses mixed up in the spirit's cup
Till flesh and spirit are molten in sunder—
These things are over, and no more mine.

These were a part of the playing I heard
Once, ere my love and my heart were at strife;
Love that sings and hath wings as a bird,
Balm of the wound and heft of the knife,
Fairer than earth is the sea, and sleep
Than overwatching of eyes that weep,
Now time has done with his one sweet word,
The wine and leaven of lovely life.

I shall go my ways, tread out my measure,
Fill the days of my daily breath
With fugitive things not good to treasure,
Do as the world doth, say as it saith;
But if we had loved each other—O sweet,
Had you felt, lying under the palms of your feet,
The heart of my heart, beating harder with pleasure
To feel you tread it to dust and death—

Ah, had I not taken my life up and given
All that life gives and the years let go,
The wine and honey, the balm and leaven,
The dreams reared high and the hopes brought low?
Come life, come death, not a word be said;
Should I lose you living, and vex you dead?
I never shall tell you on earth; and in heaven
If I cry to you then, will you hear or know?

LES NOYADES.

WHATEVER a man of the sons of men
Shall say to his heart of the lords above,
They have shown man verily, once and again,
Marvellous mercies and infinite love.

In the wild fifth year of the change of things,
When France was glorious and blood-red, fair
With dust of battle and deaths of kings,
A queen of men, with helmeted hair;

Carrier came down to the Loire and slew,
Till all the ways and the waves waxed red:
Bound and drowned, slaying two by two,
Maidens and young men, naked and wed.
They brought on a day to his judgment-place
One rough with labor and red with fight,
And a lady noble by name and face,
Faultless, a maiden, wonderful, white.

She knew not, being for shame's sake blind,
If his eyes were hot on her face hard by.
And the judge bade strip and ship them, and bind
Bosom to bosom to drown and die.

The white girl winced and whitened; but he
Caught fire, waxed bright as a great bright flame
Seen with thunder far out on the sea,
Laughed hard as the glad blood went and came.

Twice his lips quailed with delight, then said,
"I have but a word to you all, one word
Bear with me; surely I am but dead:"
And all they laughed and mocked him and heard.

"Judge, when they open the judgment-roll,
I will stand upright before God and pray:
'Lord God, have mercy on one man's soul,
For his mercy was great upon earth, I say.

"'Lord, if I loved thee—Lord, if I served—
If these who darkened thy Son's fair face
I fought with, sparing not one, nor swerved
A hand's-breadth, Lord, in the perilous place—

"'I pray thee say to this man, O Lord,
Sit thou for him at my feet on a throne.
I will face thy wrath, though it bite as a sword,
And my soul shall burn for his soul and atone.

"'For Lord, thou knowest, O God most wise,
How gracious on earth were his deeds toward me.
Shall this be a small thing in thine eyes,
That is greater in mine than the whole great sea?'

"I have loved this woman my whole life long,
And even for love's sake when have I said
'I love you?' when have I done you wrong,
Living? but now I shall have you dead.

"Yea, now, do I bid you love me, love?
Love me or loathe, we are one not twain.
But God be praised in his heaven above
For this my pleasure and that my pain!

"For never a man, being mean like me,
Shall die like me till the whole world dies.

I shall drown with her, laughing for love; and she
Mix with me, touching me, lips and eyes.

"Shall she not know me and see me all through,
Me, on whose heart as a worm she trod?
You have given me, God requite it you,
What man yet never was given of God."

O sweet one love, O my life's delight,
Dear, though the days have divided us,
Lost beyond hope, taken far out of sight,
Not twice in the world shall the gods do thus.

Had it been so hard for my love? but I,
Though the gods gave all that a god can give,
I had chosen rather the gift to die,
Cease, and be glad above all that live.

For the Loire would have driven us down to the sea,
And the sea would have pitched us from shoal to shoal;
And I should have held you, and you held me,
As flesh holds flesh, and the soul the soul.

Could I change you, help you to love me, sweet,
Could I give you the love that would sweeten death,
We should yield, go down, locked hands and feet,
Die, drown together, and breath catch breath;

But you would have felt my soul in a kiss,
And known that once if I loved you well;
And I would have given my soul for this
To burn for ever in burning hell

A LEAVE-TAKING.

LET us go hence, my songs; she will not hear.
Let us go hence together without fear;
Keep silence now, for singing-time is over
And over all old things and all things dear.
She loves not you nor me as all we love her.
Yea, though we sang as angels in her ear,
She would not hear.

Let us rise up and part; she will not know.
Let us go seaward as the great winds go,
Full of blown sand and foam; what help is there?
There is no help, for all these things are so,
And all the world is bitter as a tear.
And how these things are, though ye strove to show,
She would not know.

Let us go home and hence; she will not weep,
We gave love many dreams and days to keep,
Flowers without scent, and fruits that would not grow,
Saying, 'If thou wilt, thrust in thy sickle and reap.'
All is reaped now; no grass is left to mow;
And we that sowed, though all we fell on sleep,
She would not weep.

Let us go hence and rest; she will not love.
She shall not hear us if we sing hereof,
Nor see love's ways, how sore they are and steep.
Come hence, let be, lie still; it is enough.

Love is a barren sea, bitter and deep;
And though she saw all heaven in flower above,
She would not love.

Let us give up, go down; she will not care.
Though all the stars made gold of all the air,
And the sea moving saw before it move
One moon-flower making all the foam-flowers fair;
Though all those waves went over us, and drove
Deep down the stifling lips and drowning hair
She would not care.

Let us go hence, go hence; she will not see.
Sing all once more together: surely she,
She too, remembering days and words that were,
Will turn a little toward us, sighing; but we,
We are hence, we are gone, as though we had not been there.
Nay, and though all men seeing had pity on me,
She would not see.

ITYLUS.

SWALLOW, my sister, O sister swallow,
How can thine heart be full of the spring?
A thousand summers are over and dead.
What hast thou found in the spring to follow?
What hast thou found in thine heart to sing?
What wilt thou do when the summer is shed?

O swallow, sister, O fair swift swallow,
Why wilt thou fly after spring to the south,
The soft south whither thine heart is set?
Shall not the grief of the old time follow?
Shall not the song thereof cleave to thy mouth?
Hast thou forgotten ere I forget?

Sister, my sister, O fleet sweet swallow,
Thy way is long to the sun and the south;
But I, fulfilled of my heart's desire,
Shedding my song upon height, upon hollow,
From tawny body and sweet small mouth
Feed the heart of the night with fire.

I the nightingale all spring through,
O swallow, sister, O changing swallow,
All spring through till the spring be done,
Clothed with the light of the night on the dew,
Sing, while the hours and the wild birds follow,
Take flight and follow and find the sun.

Sister, my sister, O soft light swallow,
Though all things feast in the spring's guest-chamber,
How hast thou heart to be glad there of yet?
For where thou fliest I shall not follow,
Till life forget and death remember,
Till thou remember and I forget.

Swallow, my sister, O singing swallow,
I know not how thou hast heart to sing
Hast thou the heart? is it all past over?

Thy lord the summer is good to follow,
And fair the feet of thy lover the spring:
But what wilt thou say to the spring thy lover?

O swallow, sister, O fleeting swallow,
My heart in me is a molten ember
And over my head the waves have met.
But thou wouldst tarry or I would follow,
Could I forget or thou remember,
Couldst thou remember and I forget.

O sweet stray sister, O shifting swallow
The heart's division divideth us.
Thy heart is light as a leaf of a tree;
But mine goes forth among sea-gulfs hollow
To the place of the slaying of Itylus,
The feast of Daulis, the Thracian sea.

O swallow, sister, O rapid swallow,
I pray thee sing not a little space.
Are not the roofs and the lintels wet?
The woven web that was plain to follow,
The small slain body, the flower-like face,
Can I remember if thou forget?

O sister, sister, thy first-begotten!
The hands that cling and the feet that follow,
The voice of the child's blood crying yet
Who hath remembered me? who hath forgotten?
Thou hast forgotten, O summer swallow.
But the world shall end when I forget

ANACTORIA.

τίνοςαὖ τὺ πειθοῖ
μάψ σαγηνεύσας φιλότατα;

SAPPHO.

My life is bitter with thy love; thine eyes
Blind me, thy tresses burn me, thy sharp sighs
Divide my flesh and spirit with soft sound,
And my blood strengthens, and my veins abound.
I pray thee sigh not, speak not, draw not breath;
Let life burn down, and dream it is not death.
I would the sea had hidden us, the fire
(Wilt thou fear that, and fear not my desire?)
Severed the bones that bleach, the flesh that cleaves,
And let our sifted ashes drop like leaves.

I feel thy blood against my blood: my pain
Pains thee, and lips bruise lips, and vein stings vein.
Let fruit be crushed on fruit, let flower on flower,
Breast kindle breast, and either burn one hour.
Why wilt thou follow lesser loves? are thine
Too weak to bear these hands and lips of mine?
I charge thee for my life's sake, O too sweet
To crush love with thy cruel faultless feet,
I charge thee keep thy lips from hers or his,
Sweetest, till theirs be sweeter than my kiss.

Lest I too lure, a swallow for a dove,
Erotion or Erinna to my love.
I would my love could kill thee; I am satiated
With seeing thee live, and fain would have thee dead.
I would earth had thy body as fruit to eat,
And no mouth but some serpent's found thee sweet.
I would find grievous ways to have thee slain,
Intense device, and superflux of pain;
Vex thee with amorous agonies, and shake
Life at thy lips, and leave it there to ache:
Strain out thy soul with pangs too soft to kill,
Intolerable interludes, and infinite ill;
Relapse and reluctation of the breath,
Dumb tunes and shuddering semitones of death.
I am weary of all thy words and soft strange ways,
Of all love's fiery nights and all his days,
And all the broken kisses salt as brine
That shuddering lips make moist with waterish wine,
And eyes the bluer for all those hidden hours
That pleasure fills with tears and feeds from flowers,
Fierce at the heart with fire that half comes through,
But all the flower-like white-stained round with blue;
The fervent underlid, and that above
Lifted with laughter or abashed with love;
Thine amorous girdle, full of thee and fair,
And leavings of the lilies in thine hair.
Yea, all sweet words of thine and all thy ways,
And all the fruit of nights and flower of days,
And stinging lips wherein the hot sweet brine
That love was born of burns and foams like wine,
And eyes insatiable of amorous hours,
Fervent as fire and delicate as flowers,
Colored like night at heart, but cloven through
Like night with flame, dyed round like night with blue,
Clothed with deep eyelids under and above—
Yea, all thy beauty sickens me with love:
Thy girdle empty of thee and now not fair,
And rumous lilies in thy languid hair.
Ah, take no thought for Love's sake; shall this be,
And she who loves thy lover not love thee?
Sweet soul, sweet mouth of all that laughs and lives,
Mine is she, very mine; and she forgives.
For I beheld in sleep the light that is
In her high place in Paphos, heard the kiss
Of body and soul that mix with eager tears
And laughter stinging through the eyes and ears;
Saw Love, as burning flame from crown to feet,
Imperishable, upon her storied seat;
Clear eyelids lifted toward the north and south,
A mind of many colors and a mouth
Of many tunes and kisses; and she bowed,
With all her subtle face laughing aloud,
Bowed down upon me, saying, "Who doth the wrong,
Sappho?" but thou—thy body is the song,
Thy mouth the music; thou art more than I.
Though my voice die not till the whole world die;
Though men that hear it madden; though love weep,
Though nature change, though shame be charmed to sleep.
Ah, wilt thou slay me lest I kiss thee dead?
Yet the queen laughed from her sweet heart and said:
"Even she that flies shall follow for thy sake,
And she shall give thee gifts that would not take,
Shall kiss that would not kiss thee" (yea, kiss me)
"When thou wouldst not"—when I would not kiss thee!
Ah, more to me than all men as thou art,
Shall not my songs assuage her at the heart?
Ah, sweet to me as life seems sweet to death,
Why should her wrath fill thee with fearful breath?
Nay, sweet, for is she God alone? hath she
Made earth and all the centuries of the sea,
Taught the sun ways to travel, woven most fine
The moonbeams, shed the starbeams forth as wine,

Bound with her myrtles, beaten with her rods,
The young men and the maidens and the gods?
Have we not lips to love with, eyes for tears,
And summer and flower of women and of years?
Stars for the foot of morning, and for noon
Sunlight, and exaltation of the moon;
Waters that answer waters, fields that wear
Lilies, and languor of the Lesbian air?
Beyond those flying feet of fluttered doves,
Are there not other gods for other loves?
Yea, though she scourge thee, sweetest, for my sake,
Blossom not thorns, and flowers not blood should break.
Ah that my lips were tuneless lips, but pressed
To the bruised blossom of thy scourged white breast!
Ah that my mouth for Muses' milk were fed
On the sweet blood thy sweet small wounds had bled!
That with my tongue I felt them, and could taste
The faint flakes from thy bosom to the waist!
That I could drink thy veins as wine, and eat
Thy breasts like honey! that from face to feet
Thy body were abolished and consumed,
And in my flesh thy very flesh entombed!
Ah, ah, thy beauty! like a beast it bites,
Stings like an adder, like an arrow smites.
Ah sweet, and sweet again, and seven times sweet,
The paces and the pauses of thy feet!
Ah sweeter than all sleep or summer air
The fallen fillets fragrant from thine hair!
Yea, though their alien kisses do me wrong,
Sweeter thy lips than mine with all their song;
Thy shoulders whiter than a fleece of white,
And flower-sweet fingers good to bruise or bite
As honeycomb of the inmost honey-cells,
With almond-shaped and rose-leaf colored shells,
And blood like purple blossom at the tips
Quivering; and pain made perfect in thy lips

For my sake when I hurt thee; O that I
Durst crush thee out of life with love, and die,
Die of thy pain and my delight, and be
Mixed with thy blood and molten into thee!
Would I not plague thee dying overmuch?
Would I not hurt thee perfectly? not touch
Thy pores of sense with torture, and make bright
Thine eyes with bloodlike tears and grievous light
Strike pang from pang as note is struck from note,
Catch the sob's middle music in thy throat.
Take thy limbs living, and new-mould with these
A lyre of many faultless agonies?
Feed thee with fever and famine and fine drouth,
With perfect pangs convulse thy perfect mouth,
Make thy life shudder in thee and burn afresh,
And wring thy very spirit through the flesh?
Cruel? but love makes all that love him well
As wise as heaven and crueller than hell.
Me hath love made more bitter toward thee
Than death toward man; but were I made as he
Who hath made all things to break them one by one,
If my feet trod upon the stars and sun
And souls of men as his have alway trod,
God knows I might be crueller than God.
For who shall change with prayers or thanksgivings
The mystery of the cruelty of things?
Or say what God above all gods and years,
With offering and blood-sacrifice of tears,
With lamentation from strange lands, from graves
Where the snake pastures, from scarred mouths of slaves,
From prison, and from plunging prows of ships
Through flame like foam of the sea's closing lips—
With thwartings of strange signs, and wind-blown hair
Of comets, desolating the dim air,
When darkness is made fast with seals and bars,

And fierce reluctance of disastrous stars,
Eclipse, and sound of shaken hills, and wings
Darkening, and blind inexpiable things—
With sorrow of laboring moons, and altering light
And travail of the planets of the night,
And weeping of the weary Pleiads seven,
Feeds the mute melancholy lust of heaven?
Is not this incense bitterness, his meat
Murder? his hidden face and iron feet
Hath not man known, and felt them on their way
Threaten and trample all things and every day?
Hath he not sent us hunger? who hath cursed
Spirit and flesh with longing? filled with thirst
Their lips who cried unto him? who bade exceed
The fervid will, fall short the feeble deed,
Bade sink the spirit and the flesh aspire,
Pain animate the dust of dead desire,
And life yield up her flower to violent fate?
Him would I reach, him smite, him desecrate,
Pierce the cold lips of God with human breath,
And mix his immortality with death.
Why hath he made us? what had all we done
That we should live and loathe the sterile sun,
And with the moon wax paler as she wanes,
And pulse by pulse feel time grow through our veins?
Thee too the years shall cover; thou shalt be
As the rose born of one same blood with thee,
As a song sung, as a word said, and fall
Flower-wise, and be not any more at all,
Nor any memory of thee anywhere;
For never Muse has bound above thine hair
The high Pierian flower whose graft outgrows
All summer kinship of the mortal rose
And colour of deciduous days, nor shed
Reflex and flush of heaven about thine head,
Nor reddened brows made pale by floral grief
With splendid shadow from that lordlier leaf.

Yea, thou shalt be forgotten like spilt wine,
Except these kisses of my lips on thine
Brand them with immortality; but me—
Men shall not see bright fire nor hear the sea,
Nor mix their hearts with music, nor behold
Cast forth of heaven with feet of awful gold
And plumeless wings that make the bright air blind,
Lightning with thunder for a hound behind
Hunting through fields unfurrowed and unsown—
But in the light and laughter, in the moan
And music, and in grasp of lip and hand
And shudder of water that makes felt on land
The immeasurable tremor of all the sea,
Memories shall mix and metaphors of me.
Like me shall be the shuddering calm of night,
When all the winds of the world for pure delight
Close lips that quiver and fold up wings that ache;
When nightingales are louder for love's sake,
And leaves tremble like lute-strings or like fire;
Like me the one star swooning with desire
Even at the cold lips of the sleepless moon,
As I at thine; like me the waste white noon,
Burnt through with barren sunlight; and like me
The land-stream and the tide-stream in the sea.
I am sick with time as these with ebb and flow,
And by the yearning in my veins I know
The yearning sound of waters; and mine eyes
Burn as that beamless fire which fills the skies
With troubled stars and travailing things of flame;
And in my heart the grief consuming them
Labors, and in my veins the thirst of these,
And all the summer travail of the trees
And all the winter sickness; and the earth
Filled full with deadly works of death and birth,
Sore spent with hungry lusts of birth and death,

Has pain like mine in her divided breath ;
Her spring of leaves is barren, and her fruit
Ashes ; her boughs are burdened, and her root
Fibrous and gnarled with poison; underneath
Serpents have gnawn it through with tortuous teeth
Made sharp upon the bones of all the dead,
And wild birds rend her branches overhead.
These, woven as raiment for his word and thought,
These hath God made, and me as these, and wrought
Song, and hath lit it at my lips; and me
Earth shall not gather though she feed on thee.
As a shed tear shalt thou be shed; but I—
Lo, earth may labor, men live long and die,
Years change and stars, and the high God devise
New things, and old things wane before his eyes
Who wields and wrecks them, being more strong than they—
But, having made me, me he shall not slay.
Nor slay nor satiate, like those herds of his
Who laugh and live a little, and their kiss
Contents them, and their loves are swift and sweet,
And sure death grasps and gains them with slow feet,
Love they or hate they, strive or bow their knees—
And all these end; he hath his will of these.
Yea, but albeit he slay me, hating me—
Albeit he hide me in the deep dear sea
And cover me with cool wan foam, and ease
This soul of mine as any soul of these,
And give me water and great sweet waves, and make
The very sea's name lordlier for my sake,
The whole sea sweeter—albeit I die indeed
And hide myself and sleep and no man heed,
Of me the high God hath not all his will.
Blossom of branches, and on each high hill
Clear air and wind, and under in clamorous vales
Fierce noises of the fiery nightingales,
Buds burning in the sudden spring like fire,
The wan washed sand and the waves' vain desire,
Sails seen like blown white flowers at sea, and words
That bring tears swiftest, and long notes of birds
Violently singing till the whole world sings—
I Sappho shall be one with all these things,
With all high things for ever; and my face
Seen once, my songs once heard in a strange place,
Cleave to men's lives, and waste the days thereof
With gladness and much sadness and long love.
Yea, they shall say, earth's womb has borne in vain
New things, and never this best thing again;
Borne days and men, borne fruits and wars and wine,
Seasons and songs, but no song more like mine.
And they shall know me as ye who have known me here,
Last year when I loved Atthis, and this year
When I love thee; and they shall praise me, and say
"She hath all time as all we have our day,
Shall she not live and have her will"—even I?
Yea, though thou diest, I say I shall not die.
For these shall give me of their souls, shall give
Life, and the days and loves wherewith I live,
Shall quicken me with loving, fill with breath,
Save me and serve me, strive for me with death.
Alas, that neither moon nor snow nor dew
Nor all cold things can purge me wholly through,
Assuage me nor allay me nor appease,
Till supreme sleep shall bring me bloodless ease;
Till time wax faint in all his periods;
Till fate undo the bondage of the gods,
And lay, to slake and satiate me all through,
Lotus and Lethe on my lips like dew,
And shed around and over and under me
Thick darkness and the insuperable sea.

HYMN TO PROSERPINE.

(AFTER THE PROCLAMATION IN ROME OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.)

Vicisti, Galilæe.

I HAVE lived long enough, having seen one thing, that love hath an end ;
Goddess and maiden and queen, be near me now and befriend.
Thou art more than the day or the morrow, the seasons that laugh or that weep ;
For these give joy and sorrow ; but thou, Proserpina, sleep.
Sweet is the treading of wine, and sweet the feet of the dove ;
But a goodlier gift is thine than foam of the grapes or love.
Yea, is not even Apollo, with hair and harpstring of gold,
A bitter God to follow, a beautiful God to behold ?
I am sick of singing ; the bays burn deep and chafe : I am fain
To rest a little from praise and grievous pleasure and pain.
For the Gods we know not of, who give us our daily breath,
We know they are cruel as love or life, and lovely as death.
O Gods dethroned and deceased, cast forth, wiped out in a day !
From your wrath is the world released, redeemed from your chains, men say.
New Gods are crowned in the city, their flowers have broken your rods ;
They are merciful, clothed with pity, the young compassionate Gods.
But for me their new device is barren, the days are bare ;
Things long past over suffice, and men forgotten that were.
Time and the Gods are at strife: ye dwell in the midst thereof,
Draining a little life from the barren breasts of love.
I say to you, cease, take rest ; yea, I say to you all, be at peace,
Till the bitter milk of her breast and the barren bosom shall cease.
Wilt thou yet take all, Galilean ? but these thou shalt not take,
The laurel, the palms and the pæan, the breast of the nymphs in the brake ;
Breasts more soft than a dove's, that tremble with tenderer breath;
And all the wings of the Loves, and all the joy before death;
All the feet of the hours that sound as a single lyre,
Dropped and deep in the flowers, with strings that flicker like fire.
More than these wilt thou give, things fairer than all these things ?
Nay, for a little we live, and life hath mutable wings.
A little while and we die; shall life not thrive as it may ?
For no man under the sky lives twice, outliving his day.
And grief is a grievous thing, and a man hath enough of his tears:
Why should he labour, and bring fresh grief to blacken his years ?
Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean; the world has grown grey from thy breath;
We have drunken of things Lethean, and fed on the fulness of death.
Laurel is green for a season, and love is sweet for a day;
But love grows bitter with treason, and laurel outlives not May.
Sleep, shall we sleep after all ? for the world is not sweet in the end;
For the old faiths loosen and fall, the new years ruin and rend.
Fate is a sea without shore, and the soul is a rock that abides;
But her ears are vexed with the roar and her face with the foam of the tides.

O lips that the live blood faints in, the leavings of racks and rods!
O ghastly glories of saints, dead limbs of gibbeted Gods!
Though all men abase them before you in spirit, and all knees bend,
I kneel not neither adore you, but standing, look to the end.
All delicate days and pleasant, all spirits and sorrows are cast
Far out with the foam of the present that sweeps to the surf of the past:
Where beyond the extreme sea-wall, and between the remote sea-gates,
Waste water washes, and tall ships founder, and deep death waits:
Where, mighty with deepening sides, clad about with the seas as with wings,
And impelled of invisible tides, and fulfilled of unspeakable things,
White-eyed and poisonous finned, shark-toothed and serpentine-curled,
Rolls, under the whitening wind of the future, the wave of the world.
The depths stand naked in sunder behind it, the storms flee away;
In the hollow before it the thunder is taken and snared as a prey;
In its sides is the north-wind bound; and its salt is of all men's tears;
With light of ruin, and sound of changes, and pulse of years:
With travail of day after day, and with trouble of hour upon hour;
And bitter as blood is the spray; and the crests are as fangs that devour:
And its vapor and storm of its steam as the sighing of spirits to be;
And its noise as the noise in a dream; and its depth as the roots of the sea:
And the height of its heads as the height of the utmost stars of the air:
And the ends of the earth at the might thereof tremble, and time is made bare.
Will ye bridle the deep sea with reins, will ye chasten the high sea with rods?
Will ye take her to chain her with chains, who is older than all ye Gods?
All ye as a wind shall go by, as a fire shall ye pass and be past;
Ye are Gods, and behold ye shall die, and the waves be upon you at last.
In the darkness of time, in the deeps of the years, in the changes of things,
Ye shall sleep as a slain man sleeps, and the world shall forget you for kings.
Though the feet of thine high priests tread where thy lords and our forefathers trod,
Though these that were Gods are dead, and thou being dead art a God,
Though before thee the throned Cytherian be fallen, and hidden her head,
Yet thy kingdom shall pass, Galilean, thy dead shall go down to thee dead.
Of the maiden thy mother, men sing as a goddess with grace clad around;
Thou art throned where another was king; where another was queen she is crowned.
Yea, once we had sight of another: but now she is queen, say these.
Not as thine, not as thine was our mother, a blossom of flowering seas,
Clothed round with the world's desire as with raiment, and fair as the foam,
And fleeter than kindled fire, and a goddess, and mother of Rome.
For thine came pale and a maiden, and sister to sorrow; but ours,
Her deep hair heavily laden with odour and color of flowers,
White rose of the rose-white water, a silver splendor, a flame,
Bent down unto us that besought her, and earth grew sweet with her name.
For thine came weeping, a slave among slaves, and rejected; but she
Came flushed from the full-flushed wave, and imperial, her foot on the sea,
And the wonderful waters knew her, the winds and the viewless ways,
And the roses grew rosier, and bluer the sea-blue stream of the bays.
Ye are fallen, our lords by what token? we wist that ye should not fall.
Ye were all so fair that are broken; and one more fair than ye all.
But I turn to her still, having seen she shall surely abide in the end;
Goddess and maiden and queen, be near me now and befriend.
O daughter of earth, of my mother, her crown and blossom of birth,
I am also, I also, thy brother; I go as I came unto earth.
In the night where thine eyes are as moons are in heaven, the night where thou art,
Where the silence is more than all tunes, where sleep overflows from the heart,
Where the poppies are sweet as the rose in our world, and the red rose is white,
And the wind falls faint as it blows with the fume of the flowers of the night,

And the murmur of spirits that sleep in the shadow of Gods from afar
Grows dim in thine ears and deep as the deep dim soul of a star,
In the sweet low light of thy face, under heavens untrod by the sun,
Let my soul with their souls find place, and forget what is done and undone.
Thou art more than the Gods who number the days of our temporal breath;
For these give labor and slumber; but thou, Proserpina, death.

Therefore now at thy feet I abide for a season in silence. I know
I shall die as my fathers died, and sleep as they sleep; even so.
For the glass of the years is brittle wherein we gaze for a span;
A little soul for a little bears up this corpse which is man.*
So long I endure, no longer; and laugh not again, neither weep.
For there is no God found stronger than death; and death is a sleep.

ILICET.

THERE is an end of joy and sorrow;
Peace all day long, all night, all morrow,
  But never a time to laugh or weep.
The end is come of pleasant places,
The end of tender words and faces,
  The end of all, the poppied sleep.

No place for sound within their hearing,
No room to hope, no time for fearing,
  No lips to laugh, no lids for tears.
The old years have run out all their measure;
No chance of pain, no chance of pleasure,
  No fragment of the broken years.

Outside of all the worlds and ages,
There where the fool is as the sage is,
  There where the slayer is clean of blood,
No end, no passage, no beginning,
There where the sinner leaves off sinning,
  There where the good man is not good.

There is not one thing with another,
But Evil saith to Good: My brother,
  My brother, I am one with thee:
They shall not strive nor cry forever:
No man shall chose between them: never
  Shall this thing end and that thing be.

Wind wherein seas and stars are shaken
Shall shake them, and they shall not waken;
  None that has lain down shall arise;
The stones are sealed across their places;
One shadow is shed on all their faces,
One blindness cast on all their eyes.

Sleep, is it sleep perchance that covers
Each face, as each face were his lover's?
  Farewell; as men that sleep fare well.
The grave's mouth laughs unto derision
Desire and dread and dream and vision,
  Delight of heaven and sorrow of hell.

No soul shall tell nor lip shall number
The names and tribes of you that slumber;
  No memory, no memorial.
"Thou knowest"—who shall say thou knowest?
  There is none highest and none lowest:
  An end, an end, an end of all.

Good night, good sleep, good rest from sorrow,
To these that shall not have good morrow;
  The gods be gentle to all these.
Nay, if death be not, how shall they be?
Nay, is there help in heaven? it may be
  All things and lords of things shall cease.

*ψυχάριον εἶ βαστάζον νεκρόν.
EPICTETUS.

The stooped urn, filling, dips and flashes;
The bronzed brims are deep in ashes;
The pale old lips of death are fed.
Shall this dust gather flesh hereafter?
Shall one shed tears or fall to laughter,
At sight of all these poor old dead?

Nay, as thou wilt; these know not of it;
Thine eyes' strong weeping shall not profit,
Thy laughter shall not give thee ease;
Cry aloud, spare not, cease not crying,
Sigh, till thou cleave thy sides with sighing,
Thou shalt not raise up one of these.

Burnt spices flash, and burnt wine hisses,
The breathing flame's mouth curls and kisses
The small dried rows of frankincense;
All round the sad red blossoms smoulder,
Flowers colored like the fire, but colder,
In sign of sweet things taken hence;

Yea, for their sake and in death's favor
Things of sweet shape and of sweet savor
We yield them, spice and flowerand wine;
Yea, costlier things than wine or spices,
Whereof none knoweth how great the price is,
And fruit that comes not of the vine.

From boy's pierced throat and girl's pierced bosom
Drips, reddening round the blood-red blossoms,
The slow delicious bright soft blood,
Bathing the spices and the pyre,
Bathing the flowers and fallen fire,
Bathing the blossom by the bud.

Roses whose lips the flame had deadened
Drink till the lapping leaves are reddened
And warm wet inner petals weep;
The flower whereof sick sleep gets leisure,
Barren of balm and purple pleasure,
Fumes with no native steam of sleep.

Why will ye weep? what do ye weeping?
For walking folk and people sleeping,
And sands that fill and sands that fall,
The days rose-red, the poppied hours,
Blood, wine, and spice and fire and flowers,
There is one end of one and all.

Shall such an one lend love or borrow?
Shall these be sorry for thy sorrow?
Shall these give thanks for words or breath?
Their hate is as their loving-kindness;
The frontlet of their brows is blindness,
The armlet of their arms is death.

Lo, for no noise or light of thunder
Shall these grave-clothes be rent in sunder,
He that hath taken, shall he give?
He hath rent them: shall he bind together?
He hath bound them: shall he break the tether?
He hath slain them: shall he bid them live?

A little sorrow, a little pleasure,
Fate metes us from the dusty measure
That holds the date of all of us;
We are born with travail and strong crying,
And from the birth-day to the dying
The likeness of our life is thus.

One girds himself to serve another,
Whose father was the dust, whose mother
The little dead red worm therein;
They find no fruit of things they cherish;
The goodness of a man shall perish,
It shall be one thing with his sin.

In deep wet ways by grey old gardens
Fed with sharp spring the sweet fruit hardens;
They know not what fruits wane orgrow;
Red summer burns to the utmost ember;
They know not, neither can remember,
The old years and flowers they used to know.

Ah, for their sakes, so trapped and taken,
For theirs, forgotten and forsaken,
Watch, sleep not, gird thyself with prayer.
Nay, where the heart of wrath is broken,
Where long love ends as a thing spoken,
How shall thy crying enter there?

Though the iron sides of the old world falter
The likeness of them shall not alter
For all the rumor of periods,
The stars and seasons that come after
The tears of latter men, the laughter
Of the old unalterable gods.

Far up above the years and nations,
The high gods, clothed and crowned with patience.

Endure through days of death-like date;
They bear the witness of things hidden;
Before their eyes all life stands chidden,
As they before the eyes of Fate.

Not for their love shall Fate retire,
Nor they relent for our desire,
Nor the graves open for their call.
The end is more than joy and anguish,
Than lives that laugh and lives that languish,
The poppied sleep, the end of all!

HERMAPHRODITUS.

I.

LIFT up thy lips, turn round, look back for love,
Blind love that comes by night and casts out rest;
Of all things tired thy lips look weariest,
Save the long smile that they are wearied of.
Ah sweet, albeit no love be sweet enough,
Choose of two loves and cleave unto the best;
Two loves at either blossom of thy breast
Strive until one be under and one above.
Their breath is fire upon the amorous air,
Fire in thine eyes and where thy lips suspire:
And whosoever hath seen thee, being so fair,
Two things turn all his life and blood to fire;
A strong desire begot on great despair,
A great despair cast out by strong desire.

II.

Where between sleep and life some brief space is,
With love like gold bound round about the head,
Sex to sweet sex with lips and limbs is wed,
Turning the fruitful feud of hers and his
To the waste wedlock of a sterile kiss;
Yet from them something like as fire is shed
That shall not be assuaged till death be dead,
Though neither life nor sleep can find out this.
Love made himself of flesh that perisheth
A pleasure-house for all the loves his kin;
But on the one side sat a man like death,
And on the other a woman sat like sin.
So with veiled eyes and sobs between his breath
Love turned himself and would not enter in.

III.

Love, is it love or sleep or shadow or light
That lies between thine eyelids and thine eyes?
Like a flower laid upon a flower it lies,
Or like the night's dew laid upon the night.
Love stands upon thy left hand and thy right,
Yet by no sunset and by no moonrise
Shall make thee man and ease a woman's sighs,
Or make thee woman for a man's delight.
To what strange end hath some strange god made fair
The double blossom of two fruitless flowers?
Hid love in all the folds of all thy hair,

Fed thee on summers, watered thee with showers,
Given all the gold that all the seasons wear
To thee that art a thing of barren hours?

IV.

Yea, love, I see; it is not love but fear.
Nay, sweet, it is not fear but love, I know;
Or wherefore should thy body's blossom blow
So sweetly, or thine eyelids leave so clear
Thy gracious eyes that never made a tear—
Though for their love our tears like blood should flow,
Though love and life and death should come and go,
So dreadful, so desirable, so dear?
Yea, sweet, I know; I saw in what swift wise
Beneath the woman's and the water's kiss
Thy moist limbs melted into Salmacis,
And the large light turned tender in thine eyes,
And all thy boy's breath softened into sighs;
But Love being blind, how should he know of this?

Au Musée du Louvre, Mars 1863.

FRAGOLETTA.

O Love! what shall be said of thee?
The son of grief begot by joy?
Being sightless, wilt thou see?
Being sexless, wilt thou be
Maiden or boy?

I dreamed of strange lips yesterday
And cheeks wherein the ambiguous blood
Was like a rose's—yea
A rose's when it lay
Within the bud.

What fields have bred thee, or what groves
Concealed thee, O mysterious flower,
O double rose of Love's,
With leaves that lure the doves
From bud to bower?

I dare not kiss it, lest my lip
Press harder than an indrawn breath,
And all the sweet life slip
Forth, and the sweet leaves drip,
Bloodlike, in death.

O sole desire of my delight!
O sole delight of my desire!
Mine eyelids and eyesight
Feed on thee day and night
Like lips of fire.

Lean back thy throat of carven pearl,
Let thy mouth murmur like the dove's;
Say, Venus hath no girl,
No front of female curl,
Among her Loves.

Thy sweet low bosom, thy close hair,
Thy strait soft flanks and slenderer feet,
Thy virginal strange air,
Are these not over fair
For Love to greet?

How should he greet thee? what new name,
Fit to move all men's hearts, could move
Thee, deaf to love or shame,
Love's sister, by the same
Mother as Love?

Ah, sweet, the maiden's mouth is cold,
Her breast-blossoms are simply red,
Her hair mere brown or gold,
Fold over simple fold
Binding her head.

Thy mouth is made of fire and wine,
Thy barren bosom takes my kiss
And turns my soul to thine
And turns thy lip to mine,
And mine it is.

Thou hast a serpent in thine hair,
In all the curls that close and cling;
And ah, thy breast-flower!
Ah love, thy mouth too fair
To kiss and sting.

Cleave to me, love me, kiss mine eyes
Satiate thy lips with loving me;
Nay, for thou shalt not rise;
Lie still as Love that dies
For love of thee.

Mine arms are close about thine head,
My lips are fervent on thy face,
And where my kiss hath fed
Thy flower-like blood leaps red
To the kissed place.

O bitterness of things too sweet
O broken singing of the dove!
Love's wings are over fleet,
And like the panther's feet
The feet of Love.

RONDEL.

These many years since we began to be,
What have the gods done with us? what with me,
What with my love? they have shown me fates and fears,
Harsh springs, and fountains bitterer than the sea,
Grief a fixed star, and joy a vane that veers,
These many years.

With her, my love, with her have they done well?
But who shall answer for her? who shall tell
Sweet things or sad, such things as no man hears?
May no tears fall, if no tears ever fell,
From eyes more dear to me than starriest spheres
These many years!

But if tears ever touched, for any grief,
Those eyelids folded like a white-rose leaf,
Deep double shells where through the eye-flower peers,
Let them weep once more only, sweet and brief,
Brief tears and bright, for one who gave her tears
These many years.

SATIA TE SANGUINE.

If you loved me ever so little,
I could bear the bonds that gall,
I could dream the bonds were brittle;
You do not love me at all.

O beautiful lips, O bosom
More white than the moon's and warm,
A sterile, a ruinous blossom
Is blown your way in a storm.

As the lost white feverish limbs
Of the Lesbian Sappho, adrift
In foam where the sea-weed swims,
Swam loose for the streams to lift.

My heart swims blind in a sea
That stuns me ; swims to and fro,
And gathers to windward and lee
Lamentation, and mourning, and woe.

A broken, an emptied boat,
Sea saps it, winds blow apart,
Sick and adrift and afloat,
The barren waif of a heart.

Where, when the gods would be cruel,
Do they go for a torture? where
Plant thorns, set pain like a jewel?
Ah, not in the flesh, not there :

The racks of earth and the rods
Are weak as foam on the sands ;
In the heart is the prey for gods,
Who crucify hearts, not hands.

Mere pangs corrode and consume,
Dead when life dies in the brain ;
In the infinite spirit is room
For the pulse of an infinite pain.

I wish you were dead, my dear ;
I would give you, had I to give,
Some death too bitter to fear ;
It is better to die than live.

I wish you were stricken of thunder
And burnt with a bright flame through,
Consumed and cloven in sunder,
I dead at your feet like you.

If I could but know after all,
I might cease to hunger and ache,
Though your heart were ever so small
If it were not a stone or a snake.

You are crueller, you that we love,
Than hatred, hunger, or death;
You have eyes and breasts like a dove
And you kill men's hearts with a breath.

As plague in a poisonous city
Insults and exults on her dead,
So you, when pallid for pity
Comes love, and fawns to be fed.

As a tame beast writhes and wheedles,
He fawns to be fed with wiles;
You carve him a cross of needles,
And whet them sharp as your smiles.

He is patient of thorn and whip,
He is dumb under axe or dart;
You suck with a sleepy red lip
The wet red wounds in his heart.

You thrill as his pulses dwindle,
You brighten and warm as he bleeds,
With insatiable eyes that kindle
And insatiable mouth that feeds.

Your hands nailed love to the tree,
You stript him, scourged him with rods,
And drowned him deep in the sea
That hides the dead and their gods.

And for all this, die will he not;
There is no man sees him but I;
You came and went and forgot;
I hope he will some day die.

A LITANY.

ἐν οὐρανῷ φαεννὰς
κρύψω παρ' ὑμὶν αὐγὰς,
μιας πρὸ νυκτὸς ἑπτὰ νύκτας ἕξετε, κ.τ.λ.

Anth. Sac.

FIRST ANTIPHONE.

All the bright lights of heaven
I will make dark over thee :

One night shall be as seven
That its skirts may cover thee;
I will send on thy strong men a sword

On thy remnant a rod;
Ye shall know that I am the Lord
Saith the Lord God.

SECOND ANTIPHONE.

All the bright lights of heaven
Thou hast made dark over us;
One night has been as seven
That its skirts might cover us;
Thou has sent on our strong men a sword,
On our remnant a rod;
We know that thou art the Lord,
O Lord our God.

THIRD ANTIPHONE.

As the treeses and wings of the wind
Are scattered and shaken,
I will scatter all them that have sinned,
There shall none be taken;
As a sower that scattered seed,
So will I scatter them;
As one breaketh and shattereth a reed,
I will break and shatter them.

FOURTH ANTIPHONE.

As the wings and the locks of the wind
Are scattered and shaken,
Thou hast scattered all them that have sinned,
There was no man taken.
As a sower that scattereth seed,
So hast thou scattered us;
As one breaketh and shattereth a reed,
Thou hast broken and shattered us.

FIFTH ANTIPHONE.

From all thy lovers that love thee
I God will sunder thee;
I will make darkness above thee,
And thick darkness under thee;
Before me goeth a light,
Behind me a sword;
Shall a remnant find grace in my sight?
I am the Lord.

SIXTH ANTIPHONE.

From all our lovers that love us
Thou god didst sunder us;
Thou madest darkness above us,
And thick darkness under us;
Thou hast kindled thy wrath for a light,
And made ready thy sword;
Let a remnant find grace in thy sight,
We beseech thee, O Lord.

SEVENTH ANTIPHONE.

Wilt thou bring fine gold for a payment
For sins on this wise?
For the glittering of raiment
And the shining of eyes,
For the painting of faces
And the sundering of trust,
For the sins of thine high places
And delight of thy lust?

For your high things ye shall have lowly,
Lamentations for song;
For, behold, I God am holy,
I the Lord am strong;
Ye shall seek me and shall not reach me
Till the wine-press be trod;
In that hour ye shall turn and beseech me
Saith the Lord God.

EIGHTH ANTIPHONE.

Not with fine gold for a payment,
But with coin of sighs
But with rending of raiment
And with weeping of eyes,
But with shame of stricken faces
And with strewing of dust
For the sin of stately places
And lordship of lust;

With voices of men made lowly
Made empty of song,
O Lord God most holy,
O God most strong,
We reach out hands to reach thee
Ere the wine-press be trod;
We beseech thee, O Lord, we beseech thee
O Lord our God.

NINTH ANTIPHONE.

In that hour thou shalt say to the night,
Come down and cover us;
To the cloud on thy left and thy right,
Be thou spread over us;
A snare shall be as thy mother,
And a curse thy bride;
Thou shalt put her away, and another
Shall lie by thy side.

Thou shalt neither rise up by day
Nor lie down by night.

Would God it were dark ! thou shalt say;
  Would God it were light !
And the sight of thine eyes shall be made
  As the burning of fire ;
And thy soul shall be sorely afraid
  For thy soul's desire.

Ye whom your lords loved well,
  Putting silver and gold on you,
The inevitable hell
  Shall surely take hold on you ;
Your gold shall be for a token,
  Your staff for a rod ;
With the breaking of bands ye are broken,
  Saith the Lord God.

TENTH ANTIPHONE.

In our sorrow we said to the night,
  Fall down and cover us ;
To the darkness at left and at right,
  Be thou shed over us ;
We had breaking of spirit to mother
  And cursing to bride;
And one was slain, and another
  Stood up at our side.

We could not arise by day,
  Nor lie down by night;
Thy sword was sharp in our way,
  Thy word in our sight;
The delight of our eyelids was made
  As the burning of fire,
And our souls became sorely afraid
  For our soul's desire.

We whom the world loved well,
  Laying silver and gold on us,
The kingdom of death and of hell
  Riseth up to take hold on us;
Our gold is turned to a token,
  Our staff to a rod;
Yet shalt thou bind them up that were
    broken
  O Lord our God.

A LAMENTATION.

I.

Who hath known the ways of time
  Or trodden behind his feet ?
    There is no such man among men.
For chance overcomes him, or crime
  Changes; for all things sweet
    In time wax bitter again.
Who shall give sorrow enough,
  Or who the abundance of tears ?
Mine eyes are heavy with love
  And a sword gone through mine ears,
    A sound like a sword and fire,
    For pity, for great desire;
Who shall ensure me thereof,
  Lest I die, being full of my fears ?

Who hath known the ways and the wrath
  The sleepless spirit, the root
    And blossom of evil will,
    The divine device of a god ?
Who shall behold it or hath ?
  The twice-tongued prophets are mute,
    The many speakers are still;
      No foot has travelled or trod,
No hand has meted, his path
  Man's fate is a blood-red fruit,
    And the mighty gods have their fill
      And relax not the rein, or the rod.

Ye were mighty in heart from of old,
  Ye slew with the spear, and are slain.
Keen after heat is the cold,
  Sore after summer is rain,
And melteth man to the bone.
  As water he weareth away,
  As a flower, as an hour in a day
Fallen from laughter to moan.
But my spirit is shaken with fear
  Lest an evil thing begin.

New-born, a spear for a spear,
And one for another sin,
Or ever our tears began,
It was known from of old and said;
One law for a living man,
And another law for the dead.
For these are fearful and sad,
Vain, and things without breath;
While he lives let a man be glad,
For none hath joy of his death.

II.

Who hath known the pain, the old pain of earth,
Or all the travail of the sea,
The many ways and waves, the birth
Fruitless, the labor nothing worth?
Who hath known, who knoweth, O gods? not we.

There is none shall say he hath seen,
There is none he hath known.
Though he saith, Lo, a lord have I been,
I have reaped and sown;
I have seen the desire of mine eyes,
The beginning of love,
The season of kisses and sighs
And the end thereof
I have known the ways of the sea,
All the perilous ways;
Strange winds have spoken with me,
And the tongues of strange days.
I have hewn the pine or ships;
Where steeds run arow,
I have seen from their bridled lips
Foam blown as the snow,
With snapping of chariot-poles
And with straining of oars
I have grazed in the race the goals,
In the storm the shores;
As a greave is cleft with an arrow
At the joint of the knee,
I have cleft through the sea-straits narrow
To he heart of ths sea.
When air was smitten in sunder
I have watched on high
The ways of the stars and the thunder
In the night of the sky;
Where the dark brings forth light as a flower,
As from lips that dissever;
One abideth the space of an hour,
One endureth for ever.
Lo, what hath he seen or known
Of the way and the wave
Unbeholden, unsailed-on, unsown,
From the breast to the grave?

Or ever the stars were made, or skies,
Grief was born, and the kinless night,
Mother of gods without form or name.
And light is born out of heaven and dies,
And one day knows not another's light,
But night is one, and her shape the same.
But dumb the goddesses underground
Wait, and we hear not on earth if their feet
Rise, and the night wax loud with their wings;
Dumb, without word or shadow of sound;
And sift in scales and winnow as wheat
Men's souls, and sorrow of manifold things.

III

Nor less of grief than ours
The gods wrought long ago
To bruise men one by one;
But with the incessant hours
Fresh grief and greener woe
Spring, as the sudden sun
Year after year makes flowers;
And these die down and grow,
And the next year lacks none.

As these men sleep, have slept
The old heroes in time fled,
No dream-divided sleep;
And holier eyes have wept
Than ours when on her dead
Gods have seen Thetis weep,
With heavenly hair far-swept
Back, heavenly hands outspread
Round what she could not keep.

Could not one day withhold,
One night; and like as these
White ashes of no weight,
Held not his urn the cold
Ashes of Heracles!
For all things born one gate
Opens, no gate of gold;
Opens; and no man sees
Beyond the gods and fate.

ANIMA ANCEPS

Till death have broken
Sweet life's love-token,
Till all be spoken
That shall be said,
What dost thou praying,
O soul, and playing
With song and saying,
Things flown and fled
For this we know not—
That fresh springs flow not
And fresh grief grows not
When men are dead;
When strange years cover
Lover and lover,
And joys are over
And tears are shed.

If one day's sorrow
Mar the day's morrow—
If man's life borrow
And man's death pay—
If souls once taken,
If lives once shaken,
Arise, awaken,
By night, by day—
Why with strong crying
And years of sighing,
Living and dying,
Fast ye and pray?
For all your weeping,
Waking and sleeping;
Death comes to reaping
And takes away.
Though time rend after
Roof-tree from rafter,
A little laughter
Is much more worth
Than thus to measure
The hour, the treasure,
The pain, the pleasure,
The death, the birth;
Grief, when days alter,
Like joy shall falter;
Song-book and psalter,
Mourning and mirth.
Live like the swallow;
Seek not to follow
Where earth is hollow
Under the earth.

IN THE ORCHARD.

(PROVENÇAL BURDEN.)

Leave go my hands, let me catch breath and see;
Let the dew-fall drench either side of me;
Clear apple-leaves are soft upon that moon
Seen sidelong like a blossom in the tree;
Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

The grass is thick and cool, it lets us lie.
Kissed upon either cheek and either eye,
I turn to thee as some green afternoon
Turns toward sunset, and is loth to die;
Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

Lie closer, lean your face upon my side,
Feel where the dew fell that has hardly dried,
Hear how the blood beats that went nigh to swoon;
The pleasure lives there when the sense has died;
Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

O my fair lord, I charge you leave me this:
Is it not sweeter than a foolish kiss?
Nay take it then, my flower, my first in June,
My rose, so like a tender mouth it is:
Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

Love, till dawn sunder night from day with fire,
Dividing my delight and my desire,
The crescent life and love the plenilune,
Love me though dusk begin and dark retire;
Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

Ah, my heart fails my blood draws back; I know,
When life runs over, life is near to go;
And with the slain of love love's ways are strewn,
And with their blood, if love will have it so;
Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

Ah, do thy will now; slay me if thou wilt;
There is no building now the walls are built,
No quarrying now the corner-stone is hewn,
No drinking now the vine's whole blood is spilt;
Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

Nay, slay me now; nay, for I will be slain;
Pluck thy red pleasure from the teeth of pain,
Break down thy vine ere yet grape-gatherers prune,
Slay me ere day can slay desire again;
Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

Yea, with thy sweet lips, with thy sweet sword; yea,
Take life and all, for I will die, I say;
Love, I gave love, is life a better boon?
For sweet night's sake I will not live till day;
Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

Nay, I will sleep then only; nay, but go.
Ah sweet, too sweet to me, my sweet, I know
Love, sleep, and death go to the sweet same tune;
Hold my hair fast, and kiss me through it so.
Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

A MATCH.

If love were what the rose is,
And I were like the leaf,
Our lives would grow together
In sad or singing weather,
Blown fields or flowerful closes,
Green pleasure or grey grief;
If love were what the rose is,
And I were like the leaf.

If I were what the words are,
And love were like the tune,
With double sound and single
Delight our lips would mingle,
With kisses glad as birds are
That get sweet rain at noon;
If I were what the words are
And love were like the tune.

If you were life, my darling,
And I your love were death,
We'd shine and snow together
Ere March made sweet the weather
With daffodil and starling
And hours of fruitful breath;
If you were life, my darling,
And I your love were death.

If you were thrall to sorrow,
And I were page to joy,
We'd play for lives and seasons
With loving looks and treasons
And tears of night and morrow
And laughs of maid and boy;
If you were thrall to sorrow,
And I were page to joy.

If you were April's lady,
And I were lord in May,
We'd throw with leaves for hours
And draw for days with flowers,
Till day like night were shady
And night were bright like day;
If you were April's lady,
And I were lord in May.

If you were queen of pleasure,
And I were king of pain,
We'd hunt down love together,
Pluck out his flying-feather,
And teach his feet a measure,
And find his mouth a rein;
If you were queen of pleasure,
And I were king of pain.

FAUSTINE.

Ave Faustina Imperatrix, morituri te salutant.

LEAN back, and get some minutes' peace;
Let your head lean
Back to the shoulder with its fleece
Of locks, Faustine.

The shapely silver shoulder stoops,
Weighed over clean
With state of splendid hair that droops
Each side, Faustine.

Let me go over your good gifts
That crown you queen;
A queen whose kingdom ebbs and shifts
Each week, Faustine.

Bright heavy brow well gathered up:
White gloss and sheen;
Carved lips that make my lips a cup
To drink, Faustine.

Wine and rank poison, milk and blood,
Being mixed therein

Since first the devil threw dice with God
For you, Faustine.

Your naked new-born soul, their stake,
Stood blind between;
God said "let him that wins her take
And keep Faustine."

But this time Satan threw, no doubt;
Long since, I ween,
God's part in you was battered out;
Long since, Faustine.

The die rang sideways as it fell,
Rang cracked and thin,
Like a man's laughter heard in hell
Far down, Faustine.

A shadow of laughter like a sigh,
Dead sorrow's kin;
So rang, thrown down, the devil's die
That won Faustine.

A suckling of his breed you were,
One hard to wean;
But God, who lost you, left you fair,
We see, Faustine.

You have the face that suits a woman
For her soul's screen—
The sort of beauty that's called human
In hell, Faustine.

You could do all things but be good
Or chaste of mien;
And that you would not if you could,
We know, Faustine.

Even he who cast seven devils out
Of Magdalene
Could hardly do as much, I doubt,
For you, Faustine.

Did Satan make you to spite God?
Or did God mean
To scourge with scorpions for a rod
Our sins, Faustine?

I know what queen at first you were,
As though I had seen
Red gold and black imperious hair
Twice crown Faustine.

As if your fed sarcophagus
Spared flesh and skin,
You come back face to face with us,
The same Faustine.

She loved the games men played with death,
Where death must win;
As though the slain man's blood and breath
Revived Faustine.

Nets caught the pike, pikes tore the net;
Lithe limbs and lean
From drained-out pores dripped thick red
sweat
To soothe Faustine.

She drank the steaming drift and dust
Blown off the scene;
Blood could not ease the bitter lust
That galled Faustine.

All round the foul fat furrows reeked,
Where blood sank in;
The circus splashed and seethed and shrieked
All round Faustine.

But these are gone now: years entomb
The dust and din;
Yea, even the bath's fierce reek and fume
That slew Faustine.

Was life worth living then? and now
Is life worth sin?
Where are the imperial years? and how
Are you, Faustine?

Your soul forgot her joys, forgot
Her times of teen;
Yea, this life likewise will you not
Forget, Faustine?

For in the time we know not of
Did fate begin
Weaving the web of days that wove
Your doom, Faustine.

The threads were wet with wine, and all
Were smooth to spin;
They wove you like a Bacchanal,
The first Faustine.

And Bacchus cast your mates and you
Wild grapes to glean;
Your flower-like lips dashed with dew
From his, Faustine.

Your drenched loose hands were stretched
to hold
The vine's wet green,
Long ere they coined in Roman gold
Your face, Faustine.

Then after change of soaring feather
And winnowing fin,
You woke in weeks of feverish weather,
A new Faustine.

A star upon your birthday burned,
Whose fierce serene
Red pulseless planet never yearned
In heaven, Faustine.

Stray breaths of Sapphic song that blew
Through Mitylene
Shook the fierce quivering blood in you
By night, Faustine.

The shameless nameless loves that makes
Hell's iron gin
Shut on you like a trap that breaks
The soul, Faustine.

And when your veins were void and dead,
What ghosts unclean
Swarmed round the straitened barren bed
That hid Faustine?

What sterile growths of sexless root
Or epicene?
What flower of kisses without fruit
Of love, Faustine?

What adders came to shed their coats?
What coiled obscene
Small serpents with soft stretching throats
Caressed Faustine?

But the time came of famished hours,
Maimed loves and mean,
This ghastly thin-faced time of ours,
To spoil Faustine.

You seem a thing that hinges hold,
A love-machine
With clockwork joints of supple gold—
No more, Faustine.

Not godless, for you serve one God,
The Lampsacene,
Who metes the gardens with his rod;
Your lord, Faustine.

If one should love you with real love
(Such things have been,
Things your fair face knows nothing of
It seems, Faustine);

That clear hair heavily bound back,
The lights wherein
Shift from dead blue to burnt-up black
Your throat, Faustine,

Strong, heavy, throwing out the face
And hard bright chin
And shameful scornful lips that grace
Their shame, Faustine,

Curled lips, long since half kissed away,
Still sweet and keen;
You'd give him—poison shall we say?
Or what, Faustine?

A CAMEO.

THERE was a graven image of Desire
Painted with red blood on a ground of gold
Passing between the young men and the old,
And by him Pain, whose body shone like fire,
And Pleasure with gaunt hands that grasped their hire.
Of his left wrist, with fingers clenched and cold,
The insatiable Satiety kept hold,
Walking with feet unshod that pashed the mire,
The senses and the sorrows and the sins,
And the strange loves that suck the breasts of Hate
Till lips and teeth bite in their sharp indenture,
Followed like beasts with flap of wings and fins.
Death stood aloof behind a gaping grate,
Upon whose lock was written *Peradventure.*

SONG BEFORE DEATH.

(FROM THE FRENCH.)

1795

SWEET mother, in a minute's span
Death parts thee and my love of thee
Sweet love, that yet art living man,
Come back, true love, to comfort me.
Back, ah, come back! ah wellaway!
But my love comes not any day.

As roses, when the warm West blows,
Break to full flower and sweeten spring,
My soul would break to a glorious rose
In such wise at his whispering
In vain I listen ; wellaway !
My love says nothing any day.

You that will weep for pity of love
On the low place where I am lain,
I pray you, having wept enough,
Tell him for whom I bore such pain
That he was yet, ah ! wellaway !
My true love to my dying day.

ROCOCO.

TAKE hand and part with laughter;
Touch lips and part with tears;
Once more and no more after,
Whatever comes with years.
We twain shall not remeasure
The ways that left us twain;
Nor crush the lees of pleasure
From sanguine grapes of pain.

We twain once well in sunder,
What will the mad gods do
For hate with me, I wonder,
Or what for love with you?
Forget them till November,
And dream there's April yet,
Forget that I remember,
And dream that I forget.

Time found our tired love sleeping,
And kissed away his breath;
But what should we do weeping,
Though light love sleep to death?
We have drained his lips at leasure,
Till there's not left to drain
A single sob of pleasure,
A single pulse of pain.

Dream that the lips once breathless
Might quicken if they would;
Say that the soul is deathless;
Dream that the gods are good;
Say march may wed September,
And time divorce regret;
But not that you remember,
And not that I forget.

We have heard from hidden places
What love scarce lives and hears:
We have seen on fervent faces
The pallor of strange tears:
We have trod the wine-vats treasure,
Whence, ripe to steam and stain,
Foams round the feet of pleasure
The blood-red must of pain.

Remembrance may recover
And time bring back to time
The name of your first lover,
The ring of my first rhyme;
But rose-leaves of December
The frosts of June shall fret,
The day that you remember,
The day that I forget.

The snake that hides and hisses
In heaven we twain have known;
The grief of cruel kisses,
The joy whose mouth makes moan;
The pulses pause and measure,
Where in one furtive vein
Throbs through the heart of pleasure
The purpler blood of pain.

We have done with tears and treasons
And love for treason's sake;
Room for the swift new seasons,
The years that burn and break,
Dismantle and dismember
Men's days and dreams, Juliette;
For love may not remember,
But time will not forget.

Life treads down love in flying,
Time withers him at root;
Bring all dead things and dying,
Reaped sheaf and ruined fruit,
Where, crushed by three days' pressure
Our three days' love lies slain;
And earlier leaf of pleasure,
And latter flower of pain.

Breathe close upon the ashes,
It may be flame will leap;
Unclose the soft close lashes,
Lift up the lids and weep.
Light love's extinguised ember,
Let one tear leave it wet
For one that you remember
And ten that you forget.

STAGE LOVE.

When the game began between them for a jest,
He played king and she played queen to match the best;
Laughter soft as tears, and tears that turned to laughter,
These were things she sought for years and sorrowed after.

Pleasure with dry lips, and pain that walks by night;
All the sting and all the stain of long delight;
These were things she knew not of, that knew not of her,
When she played at half a love with half a lover.

Time was chorus, gave them cues to laugh or cry;
They would kill, befool, amuse him, let him die;
Set him webs to weave to-day and break to-morrow,
Till he died for good in play, and rose in sorrow.

What the years mean; how times dies and is not slain;
How love grows and laughs and cries and wanes again;
These were things she came to know, and take their measure,
When the play was played out so for one man's pleasure.

THE LEPER.

Nothing is better, I well think,
Than love; the hidden well-water
Is not so delicate to drink:
This was well seen of me and her.

I served her in a royal house;
I served her wine and curious meat
For will to kiss between her brows
I had no heart to sleep or eat.

Mere scorn God knows she had of me;
A poor scribe, nowise great or fair,
Who plucked his clerk's hood back to see
Her curled up lips and amorous hair.

I vex my head with thinking this.
Yea, though God always hated me,
And hates me now that I can kiss
Her eyes, plait up her hair to see

How she then wore it on the brows,
Yet am I glad to have her dead
Here in this wretched wattled house
Where I can kiss her eyes and head.

Nothing is better, I well know,
Than love; no amber in cold sea
Or gathered berries under snow:
That is well seen of her and me.

Three thoughts I make my pleasure of:
First I take heart and think of this:
That knight's gold hair she chose to love,
His mouth she had such will to kiss.

Then I remember that sundawn
I brought him by a privy way
But at her lattice, and thereon
What gracious words she found to say.

(Cold rushes for such little feet—
Both feet could lie into my hand.
A marvel was it of my sweet
Her upright body could so stand.)

"Sweet friend, God give you thank and grace
Now am I clean and whole of shame,
Nor shall men burn me in the face
For my sweet fault that scandals them."

I tell you over word by word.
She, sitting edgewise on her bed,
Holding her feet, said thus. The third,
A sweeter thing than these, I said.

God, that makes time and ruins it,
And alters not abiding God,
Changed with disease her body sweet,
The body of love wherein she abode.

Love is more sweet and comlier
Than a dove's throat strained out to sing.
All they spat out and cursed at her
And cast her forth for a base thing.

They cursed her, seeing how God had wrought
This curse to plague her, a curse of his.
Fools were they surely, seeing not
How sweeter than all sweet she is.

He that had held her by the hair,
With kissing lips blinding her eyes,
Felt her bright bosom, strained and bare,
Sigh under him, with short mad cries

Out of her throat and sobbing mouth
And body broken up with love,
With sweet hot tears his lips were loth
Her own should taste the savor of,

Yea, he inside whose grasp all night
Her fervent body leapt or lay,
Stained with sharp kisses red and white,
Found her a plague to spurn away.

I hid her in this wattled house,
I served her water and poor bread,
For joy to kiss between her brows
Time upon time I was nigh dead.

Bread failed; we got but well-water
And gathered grass with dropping seed.
I had such joy of kissing her,
I had small care to sleep or feed.

Sometimes when service made me glad
The sharp tears leapt between my lids,
Falling on her, such joy I had
To do the service God forbids.

"I pray you let me be at peace,
Get hence, make room for me to die."
She said that: her poor lip would cease,
Put up to mine, and turn to cry.

I said, "Bethink yourself how love
Fared in us twain, what either did;
Shall I unclothe my soul thereof?
That I should do this, God forbid."

Yea, though God hateth us, he knows
That hardly in a little thing
Love faileth of the work it does
Till it grow ripe for gathering.

Six months, and now my sweet is dead
A trouble takes me; I know not
If all were done well, all well said,
No word or tender deed forgot.

Too sweet, for the least part in her,
To have shed life out by fragments; yet,
Could the close mouth catch breath and stir,
I might see something I forget.

Six months, and I sit still and hold
In two cold palms her cold two feet.
Her hair, half grey half ruined gold,
Thrills me and burns me in kissing it.

Love bites and stings me through, to see
Her keen face made of sunken bones.
Her worn-off eyelids madden me,
That were shot through with purple once.

She said, "Be good with me; I grow
So tired for shame's sake, I shall die
If you say nothing:" even so.
And she is dead now and shame put by.

Yea, and the scorn she had of me
In the old time, doubtless vexed her then.
I never should have kissed her. See
What fools God's anger makes of men!

She might have loved me a little too,
Had I been humbler for her sake.
But that new shame could make love new
She saw not—yet her shame did make.

I took too much upon my love,
Having for such mean service done
Her beauty and all the ways thereof,
Her face and all the sweet thereon.

Yea, all this while I tended her,
I know the old love held fast his part:
I know the old scorn waxed heavier,
Mixed with sad wonder, in her heart.

It may be all my love went wrong—
A scribe's work writ awry and blurred,
Scrawled after the blind evensong—
Spoilt music with no perfect word.

But surely I would fain have done
All things the best I could. Perchance
Because I failed, came short of one,
She kept at heart that other man's.

I am grown blind with all these things:
It may be now she hath in sight
Some better knowledge; still there clings
The old question. Will not God do right?

En ce temps-là estoyt dans ce pays grand nombre de ladres et de meseaulx, ce dont le roy eut grand desplaisir, ven que Dieu dust en estre moult griefvement courroucé. Ores il advint qu'une noble damoyselle appelée Yolande de Sallières estant atteincte et touste guastée de ce vilain mal, tous ses amys et ses parens ayant devant leurs yeux la paour de Dieu la firent issir fors de leurs maisons et oncques ne voulurent recepvoir ni reconforter chose mauldicte de Dieu et à tous les hommes puante et abhominable. Ceste dame avoyt esté moult bélle et gracieuse de formes, et de son corps elle estoyt large et de vie lascive. Pourtant nul des amans qui l'avoyent souventesfois accollée et basiée moult tendrement ne voulust plus héberger si laide femme et si détestable pescheresse. Ung seul clerc qui feut premiérement son lacquays et son entremetteur en matière d'amour la recut chez luy et la récéla dans une petite cabane. Là mourut la meschinette de grande misère et de male mort: et après elle décéda ledist clerc qui pour grand amour l'avoyt six mois durant soignée, lavée, habillée et deshabillée tous les jours de ses mains propres. Mesme dist-on que ce meschant homme et mauldict clerc reméмourant de la grande beauté passée et guastée de ceste femme se délectoyt maintesfois à la baiser sur sa bouche orde et lépreuse et l'accoller doulcement de ses mains amoureuses. Aussy est-il mort de ceste mesme maladie abhominable. Cecy advint près Fontainebellant en Gastinois. Et quand ouyt le roy Philippe ceste adventure moult en estoyt esmerveillé.

Grandes Chroniques de France, 1505.

A BALLAD OF BURDENS.

THE burden of fair women. Vain delight,
  And love self-slain in some sweet shameful way,
And sorrowful old age that comes by night
  As a thief comes that has no heart by day,
  And change that finds fair cheeks and leaves them grey,
And weariness that keeps awake for hire,
  And grief that says what pleasure used to say;
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of bought kisses. This is sore,
  A burden without fruit in childbearing;
Between the nightfall and the dawn threescore,
  Threescore between the dawn and evening.
  The shuddering in thy lips, the shuddering
In thy sad eyelids tremulous like fire,
  Makes love seem shameful and a wretched thing.
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of sweet speeches. Nay, kneel down,
  Cover thy head, and weep; for verily
These market-men that buy thy white and brown
  In the last days shall take no thought for thee.
  In the last days like earth thy face shall be,
Yea, like sea-marsh made thick with brine and mire,
  Sad with sick leavings of the sterile sea.
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of long living. Thou shalt fear
  Waking, and sleeping mourn upon thy bed;
And say at night "Would God the day were here,"
  And say at dawn "Would God the day were dead."
  With weary days thou shalt be clothed and fed,
And wear remorse of heart for thine attire,
  Pain for thy girdle and sorrow upon thine head;
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of bright colors. Thou shalt see
  Gold tarnished, and the grey above the green;
And as the thing thou seest thy face shall be,
  And no more as the thing beforetime seen.
  And thou shalt say of mercy "It hath been,"
And living, watch the old lips and loves expire,
  And talking, tears shall take thy breath between.
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of sad sayings. In that day
  Thou shalt tell all thy days and hours, and tell
Thy times and ways and words of love, and say
  How one was dear and one desirable,
  And sweet was life to hear and sweet to smell,
But now with lights reverse the old hours retire
  And the last hour is shod with fire from hell.
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of four seasons. Rain in spring,
  White rain and wind among the tender trees;
A summer of green sorrows gathering,
  Rank autumn in a mist of miseries,
  With sad face set towards the year, that sees
The charred ash drop out of the dropping pyre,
  And winter wan with many maladies;
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of dead faces. Out of sight
And out of love, beyond the reach of hands,
Changed in the changing of the dark and light,
They walk and weep about the barren lands
Where no seed is nor any garner stands,
Where in short breaths the doubtful days respire,
And time's turned glass lets through the sighing sands;
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of much gladness. Life and lust
Forsake thee, and the face of thy delight;
And underfoot the heavy hour strews dust;
And overhead strange weathers burn and bite:
And where the red was, lo the bloodless white,
And where truth was, the likeness of a liar,
And where day was, the likeness of the night;
This is the end of every man's desire.

L'ENVOY.

Princes, and ye whom pleasure quickeneth,
Heed well this rhyme before your pleasure tire;
For life is sweet, but after life is death.
This is the end of every man's desire.

RONDEL.

KISSING her hair I sat against her feet,
Wove and unwove it, wound and found it sweet
Made fast therewith her hands, drew down her eyes,
Deep as deep flowers and dreamy like dim skies;
With her own tresses bound and found her fair,
Kissing her hair.

Sleep were no sweeter than her face to me,
Sleep of cold sea-bloom under the cold sea;
What pain could get between my face and hers?
What new sweet thing would love not relish worse?
Unless, perhaps, white death had kissed me there,
Kissing her hair?

BEFORE THE MIRROR.

(VERSES WRITTEN UNDER A PICTURE.)

INSCRIBED TO J. A. WHISTLER.

WHITE rose in red rose-garden
Is not so white;
Snowdrops that plead for pardon
And pine for fright
Because the hard East blows
Over their maiden rows
Grow not as this face grows from pale to bright.

Behind the veil, forbidden
Shut up from sight,
Love, is there sorrow hidden,
Is there delight?
Is joy thy dower of grief,
White rose of weary leaf,
Late rose whose life is brief, whose loves are light?

Soft snows that hard winds harden
Till each flake bite
Fill all the flowerless garden
Whose flowers took flight
Long since when summer ceased,
And men rose up from feast.
And warm west wind grew east, and warm day night.

II.

"Come snow, come wind or thunder
High up in air,
I watch my face, and wonder
At my bright hair;
Nought else exalts or grieves
The rose at heart, that heaves
With love of her own leaves and lips that pair.

"She knows not loves that kissed her
She knows not where,
Art thou the ghost, my sister,
White sister there,
Am I the ghost, who knows?
My hand, a fallen rose,
Lies snow-white on white snows, and takes no care.

"I cannot see what pleasures
Or what pains were;
What pale new loves and treasures
New years will bear;
What beam will fall, what shower,
What grief or joy for dower;
But one thing knows the flower; the flower is fair."

III.

Glad, but not flushed with gladness,
Since joys go by;
Sad, but not bent with sadness,
Since sorrows die;
Deep in the gleaming glass
She sees all past things pass,
And all sweet life that was lie down and lie.

There glowing ghosts of flowers
Draw down, draw nigh;
And wings of swift spent hours
Take flight and fly;
She sees by formless gleams,
She hears across cold streams,
Dead mouths of many dreams that sing and sigh.

Face fallen and white throat lifted,
With sleepless eye
She sees old loves that drifted,
She knew not why,
Old loves and faded fears
Float down a stream that hears
The flowing of all men's tears beneath the sky.

EROTION.

SWEET for a little even to fear, and sweet,
O love, to lay down fear at love's fair feet;
Shall not some fiery memory of his breath
Lie sweet on lips that touch the lips of death?
Yet leave me not; yet, if thou wilt, be free;
Love me no more, but love my love of thee.
Love where thou wilt, and live thy life; and I,
One thing I can, and one love cannot—die.

Pass from me; yet thine arms, thine eyes, thine hair,
Feed my desire and deaden my despair.
Yet once more ere time change us, ere my cheek
Whiten, ere hope be dumb or sorrow speak
Yet once more ere thou hate me, one full kiss;
Keep other hours for others, save me this.
Yea, and I will not (if it please thee) weep.

Lest thou be sad; I will but sigh, and sleep.
Sweet, does death hurt? thou canst not do me wrong:
I shall not lack thee, as I loved thee, long.
Hast thou not given me above all that live
Joy, and a little sorrow shalt not give?
What even though fairer fingers of strange girls
Pass nestling through thy beautiful boy's curls
As mine did, or those curled lithe lips of thine
Meet theirs as these, all theirs come after mine;
And though I were not, though I be not, best,
I have loved and love thee more than all the rest.
O love, O lover, loose or hold me fast,
I had thee first, whoever have thee last;
Fairer or not, what need I know, what care?
To thy fair bud my blossom once seemed fair.
Why am I fair at all before thee, why
At all desired? seeing thou art fair, not I.
I shall be glad of thee, O fairest head,
Alive, alone, without thee, with thee, dead;
I shall remember while the light lives yet.
And in the night-time I shall not forget.
Though (as thou wilt) thou leave me ere life leave,
I will not, for thy love I will not, grieve;
Not as they use who love not more than I,
Who love not as I love thee though I die;
And though thy lips, once mine, be oftener prest
To many another brow and balmier breast,
And sweeter arms, or sweeter to thy mind,
Lull thee or lure, more fond thou wilt not find.

IN MEMORY OF WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR.

BACK to the flower-town, side by side,
The bright months bring,
New-born, the bridegroom and the bride,
Freedom and spring.

The sweet land laughs from sea to sea,
Filled full of sun;
All things come back to her, being free;
All things but one.

In many a tender wheaten plot
Flowers that were dead
Live, and old suns revive; but not
That holier head.

By this white wandering waste of sea,
Far north, I hear
One face shall never turn to me
As once this year:
Shall never smile and turn and rest
On mine as there,
Nor one most sacred hand be prest
Upon my hair.

I came as one whose thoughts half linger,
Half run before;
The youngest to the oldest singer
That England bore.

I found him whom I shall not find
Till all grief end,
In holiest age our mightiest mind,
Father and friend.

But thou, if anything endure,
If hope there be,
O spirit that man's life left pure,
Man's death set free,

Not with disdain of days that were
Look earthward now;
Let dreams revive the reverend hair,
The imperial brow;

Come back in sleep, for in the life
Where thou art not
We find none like thee. Time and strife
And the world's lot.

Move thee no more; but love at least
And reverent heart
May move thee, royal and released,
Soul, as thou art.

And thou, his Florence, to thy trust
Receive and keep,
Keep safe his dedicated dust,
His sacred sleep.

So shall thy lovers, come from far,
Mix with thy name
As morning-star with evening-star
His faultless fame.

A SONG IN TIME OF ORDER. 1852.

PUSH hard across the sand,
For the salt wind gathers breath;
Shoulder and wrist and hand,
Push hard as the push of death.

The wind is as iron that rings,
The foam-heads loosen and flee;
It swells and welters and swings,
The pulse of the tide of the sea.

And up on the yellow cliff
The long corn flickers and shakes;
Push, for the wind holds stiff,
And the gunwale dips and rakes.

Good hap to the fresh fierce weather,
The quiver and beat of the sea!
While three men hold together,
The kingdoms are less by three.

Out to the sea with her there,
Out with her over the sand,
Let the kings keep the earth for their share!
We have done with the sharers of land.

They have tied the world in a tether,
They have bought over God with a fee;
While three men hold together,
The kingdoms are less by three.

We have done with the kisses that sting,
The thief's mouth red from the feast,
The blood on the hands of the king,
And the lie at the lips of the priest.

Will they tie the winds in a tether,
Put a bit in the jaws of the sea?
While three men hold together,
The kingdoms are less by three.

Let our flag run out straight in the wind!
The old red shall be floated again
When the rank that are thin shall be thinned,
When the names that were twenty are ten;

When the devil's riddle is mastered
And the galley-bench creaks with a Pope,
We shall see Buonaparte the bastard
Kick heels with his throat in a rope.

While the shepherd sets wolves on his sheep
And the emperor halters his Kine,
While Shame is a watchman asleep
And Faith is a keeper of swine.

Let the wind shake our flag like a feather,
Like the plumes of the foam of the sea!
While three men hold together,
The kingdoms are less by three.

All the world has its burdens to bear,
From Cayenne to the Austrian whips;
Forth, with the rain in our hair
And the salt sweet foam in our lips;

In the teeth of the hard glad weather,
In the blown wet face of the sea;
While three men hold together,
The kingdoms are less by three.

A SONG IN TIME OF REVOLUTION. 1860.

THE heart of the rulers is sick, and the high-priest covers his head:
For this is the song of the quick that is heard in the ears of the dead.

The poor and the halt and the blind are keen and mighty and fleet:
Like the noise of the blowing of wind is the sound of the noise of their feet.

The wind has the sound of a laugh in the clamor of days and of deed:
The priests are scattered like chaff, and the rulers broken like reeds.

The high-priest sick from qualms, with his raiment bloodily dashed;
The thief with branded palms, and the liar with cheeks abashed.

They are smitten, they tremble greatly, they are pained for their pleasant things:
For the house of the priests made stately, and the might in the mouth of the kings.

They are grieved and greatly afraid; they are taken, they shall not flee:
For the heart of the nations is made as the strength of the springs of the sea.

They were fair in the grace of gold, they walked with delicate feet:
They were clothed with the cunning of old, and the smell of their garments was sweet.

For the breaking of gold in their hair they halt as a man made lame:
They are utterly naked and bare; their mouths are bitter with shame.

Wilt thou judge thy people now, O king that wast found most wise?
Wilt thou lie any more, O thou whose mouth is emptied of lies?

Shall God make a pact with thee, till his hook be found in thy sides?
Wilt thou put back the time of the sea, or the place of the season of tides?

Set a word in thy lips, to stand before God with a word in thy mouth:
That "the rain shall return in the land, and the tender dew after drouth."

But the arm of the elders is broken, their strength is unbound and undone:
They wait for a sign of a token; they cry, and there cometh none.

Their moan is in every place, the cry of them filleth the land:
There is shame in the sight of their face, there is fear in the thews of their hand.

They are girdled about the reins with a curse for the girdle thereon:
For the noise of the rending of chains the face of their color is gone.

For the sound of the shouting of men they
are grievously stricken at heart:
They are smitten asunder with pain, their
bones are smitten apart.

There is none of them all that is whole;
their lips gape open for breath:
They are clothed with sickness of soul,
and the shape of the shadow of death.

The wind is thwart in their feet; it is full
of the shouting of mirth;
As one shaketh the sides of a sheet so it
shaketh the ends of the earth.

The sword, the sword is made keen; the
iron has opened its mouth;
The corn is red that was green; it is bound
for the sheaves of the south.

The sound of a word was shed, the sound
of the wind as a breath
In the ears of the souls that were dead, in
the dust of the deepness of death;

Where the face of the moon is taken, the
ways of the stars undone,
The light of the whole sky shaken, the
light of the face of the sun:

Where the waters are emptied and broken,
the waves of the waters are stayed;
Where God has bound for a token the
darkness that maketh afraid;

Where the sword was covered and hidden,
and dust had grown in its side,
A word came forth which was bidden, the
crying of one that cried:

The sides of the two-edged sword shall be
bare, and its mouth shall be red,
For the breath of the face of the Lord that
is felt in the bones of the dead.

TO VICTOR HUGO

In the fair days when God
By man as godlike trod,
And each alike was Greek, alike was free,
God's lightning spared, they said,
Alone the happier head
Whose laurels screened it; fruitless grace
for thee,
To whom the high gods gave of right
Their thunders and their laurels and their
light.

Sunbeams and bays before
Our master's servants wore,
For these Appollo left in all men's lands
But far from these ere now
And watched with jealous brow
Lay the blind lightnings shut between
God's hands,
And only loosed on slaves and kings
The terror of the tempest of their wings.

Born in those younger years
That shone with storms of spears
And shook in the wind blown from a dead
world's pyre,
When by her back-blown hair
Napoleon caught the fair
And fierce Republic with her feet of fire,
And stayed with iron words and hands
Her flight, and freedom in a thousand lands

Thou sawest the tides of things
Close over heads of kings,
And thine hand felt the thunder and to
thee
Laurels and lightnings were
As sunbeams and soft air
Mixed each in other, or as mist with sea
Mixed, or as memory with desire,
Or the lute's pulses with the louder lyre.

For thee man's spirit stood
Disrobed of flesh and blood,
And bear the heart of the most secret hours;
And to thine hand more tame
Than birds in winter came
High hopes and unknown flying forms of powers,
And from thy table fed, and sang
Till with the tune men's ears took fire and rang.

Even all men s eyes and ears
With fiery sound and tears
Waxed hot, and cheeks caught flame and eyelids light,
At those high songs of thine
That stung the sense like wine,
Or fell more soft than dew or snow by night,
Or wailed as in some flooded cave
Sobs the strong broken spirit of a wave.

But we, our master, we
Whose hearts, uplift to thee,
Ache with the pulse of thy remembered song,
We ask not nor await
From the clenched hands of fate,
As thou, remission of the world's old wrong;
Respite we ask not, nor release;
Freedom a man may have, he shall not peace.

Though thy most fiery hope
Storm heaven, to set wide ope
The all-sought-for gate whence God or Chance debars
All feet of men, all eyes—
The old night resumes her skies,
Her hollow hiding-place of clouds and stars,
Where nought save these is sure in sight
And, paven with death, our days are roofed with night.

One thing we can; to be
Awhile, as men may, free;
But not by hope or pleasure the most stern
Goddess, most awful-eyed,
Sits, but on either side
Sits sorrow and the wrath of hearts that burn,
Sad faith, that cannot hope or fear,
And memory grey with many a flowerless year.

Not that in stranger's wise
I lift not loving eyes
To the fair foster-mother France, that gave
Beyond the pale fleet foam
Help to my sires and home,
Whose great sweet breast could shelter those and save
Whom from her nursing breasts and hands
Their land cast forth of old on gentler lands.

Not without thoughts that ache
For theirs and for thy sake,
I, born o exiles, hail thy banished head
I whose young song took flight
Toward the great heat and light
On me a child from thy far splendor shed,
From thine high place of soul and song,
Which, fallen on eyes yet feeble, made them strong.

Ah, not with lessening love,
For memories born hereof,
I look to that sweet mother-land, and see
The old fields and fair full streams,
And skies, but fled like dreams
The feet of freedom and the thought of thee;
And all between the skies and graves
The mirth of mockers and the shame of slaves.

She, killed with noisome air,
Even she ! and still so fair,
Who said " Let there be freedom, ' and there was
Freedom; and as a lance
The fiery eyes of France
Touched the world's sleep and as a sleep made pass
Forth of men's heavier ears and eyes
Smitten with fire and thunder from new skies.

Are they men's friends indeed
Who watch them weep and bleed ?
Because thou hast loved us, shall the gods love thee ?
Thou first of men and friend,
Seest thou, even thou, the end ?

Thou knowest what hath been, knowest thou what shall be?
Evils may pass and hopes endure:
But fade is dim, and all the gods obscure.

O nursed in airs apart,
O poet highest of heart,
Hast thou seen time, who hast seen so many things?
Are not the years more wise,
More sad than keenest eyes,
The years with soundless feet and sounding wings?
Passing we hear them not, but past
The clamor of them thrills us, and their blast.

Thou art chief of us, and lord;
Thy song is as a sword
Keen-edged and scented in the blade from flowers;
Thou art lord and king but we
Lift younger eyes; and see
Less of high hope, less light on wandering hours;
Hours that have borne men down so long,
Seen the right fail, and watched uplift the wrong.

But thine imperial soul
As years and ruins roll
To the same end, and all things and all dreams
With the same wreck and roar
Drift on the dim same shore,
Still in the bitter foam and brackish streams
Tracks the fresh water-spring to be
And sudden sweeter fountains in the sea.

As once the high God bound
With many a rivet round
Man's saviour, and with iron nailed him through,
At the wild end of things,
Where even his own bird's wings
Flagged whence the sea shone like a drop of dew,
From Caucasus beheld below
Past fathoms of unfathonable snow;

So the strong God, the chance
Central of circumstance,
Still shows him exile who will not be slave;
All thy great fame and thee
Girt by the dim strait sea
With multitudinous walls of wandering wave;
Shows us our greatest from his throne
Fate-stricken, and rejected of his own.

Yea, he is strong, thou say'st,
A mystery many-faced,
The wild beasts know him and the wild birds flee;
The blind night sees him, death
Shrinks beaten at his breath,
And his right hand is heavy on the sea:
We know he hath made us, and is king;
We know not if he care for anything.

Thus much, no more, we know;
He bade what is be so,
Bade light be and bade night be, one by one;
Bade hope and fear, bade ill
And good redeem and kill,
Till all men be aweary of the sun
And this world burn in its own flame
And bear no witness longer of his name.

Yet though all this be thus,
Be those men praised of us
Who have loved and wrought and sorrowed and not sinned
For fame or fear or gold,
Nor waxed for winter cold,
Nor changed for changes of the worldly wind;
Praised above men of men be these.
Till this one world and work we know shall cease.

Yea, one thing more than this,
We know that one thing is,
The splendor of a spirit without blame
That not the laboring years
Blind-born, nor any fears,
Nor men nor any gods can tire or tame;
But purer power with fiery breath
Fills, and exalts above the gulfs of death

Praised above men be thou,
Whose laurel-laden brow,
Made for the morning, droops not in the night;
Praised and beloved, that none
Of all thy great things done

Flies higher than thy most equal spirits flight;
Praised, that nor doubt nor hope could bend
Earth's loftiest head, found upright to the end.

BEFORE DAWN.

SWEET life, if life were stronger,
Earth clear of years that wrong her
Then two things might live longer
Two sweeter things than they;
Delight, the rootless flower,
And love, the bloomless bower;
Delight that lives an hour,
And love that lives a day.

From evensong to daytime,
When April melts in Maytime,
Love lengthens out his playtime,
Love lessens breath by breath,
And kiss by kiss grows older
On listless throat or shoulder
Turned sidewise now, turned colder
Than life that dreams of death.

This one thing once worth giving
Life gave, and seemed worth living;
Sin sweet beyond forgiving
And brief beyond regret:
To laugh and love together
And weave with foam and feather
And wind and words the tether
Our memories play with yet.

Ah, one thing worth beginning,
One thread in life worth spinning,
Ah sweet, one sin worth sinning
With all the whole soul's will;
To lull you till one stilled you,
To kiss you till one killed you,
To feed you till one filled you,
Sweet lips, if love could fill;

To hunt sweet Love and lose him
Between white arms and bosom,
Between the bud and blossom,
Between your throat and chin;
To say of shame—what is it?
Of virtue—we can miss it,
Of sin—we can but kiss it,
And it's no longer sin:

To feel the strong soul, stricken
Through fleshly pulses, quicken
Beneath swift sighs that thicken,
Soft hands and lips that smite;
Lips that no love can tire,
With hands that sting like fire,
Weaving the web Desire
To snare the bird Delight.

But love so lightly plighted,
Our love with torch unlighted,
Paused near us unaffrighted,
Who found and left him free;
None, seeing us cloven in sunder,
Will weep or laugh or wonder;
Light love stands clear of thunder
And safe from winds at sea.

As, when late larks give warning,
Of dying lights and dawning,
Night murmurs to the morning,
"Lie still, O love, lie still;"
And half her dark limbs cover
The white limbs of her lover,
With amorous plumes that hover
And fervent lips that chill:

As scornful day represses
Night's void and vain caresses,
And from her cloudier tresses
Unwinds the gold of his,
With limbs from limbs dividing
And breath by breath subsiding;
For love has no abiding,
But dies before the kiss.

So hath it been, so be it;
For who shall live and flee it?
But look that no man see it
Or hear it unaware;
Lest all who love and choose him
See Love, and so refuse him:
For all who find him lose him,
But all have found him fair.

DOLORES.

(NOTRE-DAME DES SEPT DOULEURS.)

Cold eyelids that hide like a jewel
Hard eyes that grow soft for an hour;
The heavy white limbs, and the cruel
Red mouth like a venomous flower;
When these are gone by with their glories,
What shall rest of thee then, what remain,
O mystic and sombre Dolores
Our Lady of Pain?

Seven sorrows the priests give their Virgin;
But thy sins, which are seventy times seven,
Seven ages would fail thee to purge in,
And then they would haunt thee in heaven:
Fierce midnights and famishing morrows,
And the loves that complete and control
All the joys of the flesh, all the sorrows
That wear out the soul.

O garment not golden but gilded
O garden where all men may dwell,
O tower not of ivory, but builded
By hands that reach heaven from hell:
O mystical rose of the mire,
O house not of gold but of gain.
O house of unquenchable fire,
Our Lady of Pain!

O lips full of lust and of laughter,
Curled snakes that are fed from my breast
Bite hard, lest remembrance come after
And press with new lips where you pressed.
For my heart too springs up at the pressure,
Mine eyelids too moisten and burn;
Ah, feed me and fill me with pleasure,
Ere pain come in turn.

In yesterday's reach and to-morrow's,
Out of sight though they lie of to-day,
There have been and there yet shall be sorrows,
That smite not and bite not in play.
The life and the love thou despisest,
These hurt us indeed, and in vain,
O wise among women, and wisest,
Our Lady of Pain.

Who gave thee thy wisdom? what stories
That stung thee, what visions that smote?
Wert thou pure and a maiden, Dolores,
When desire took thee first by the throat?
What bud was the shell of a blossom
That all men may smell to and pluck?
What milk fed thee first at what bosom?
What sins gave thee suck?

We shift and bedeck and bedrape us,
Thou art nobler and nude and antique;
Libitina thy mother, Priapus
Thy father, a Tuscan and Greek.
We play with light loves in the portal,
And wince and relent and refrain;
Loves die, and we know thee immortal,
Our Lady of Pain.

Fruits fail and love dies and time ranges;
Thou art fed with perpetual breath,
And alive after infinite changes.

And fresh from the kisses of death ;
Of languors rekindled and rallied,
Of barren delights and unclean,
Things monstrous and fruitless, a pallid
And poisonous queen.

Could you hurt me, sweet lips, though I hurt you ?
Men touch them, and change in a trice
The lilies and languors of virtue
For the raptures and roses of vice;
Those lie where thy foot on the floor is,
These crown and caress thee and chain,
O splendid and sterile Dolores,
Our Lady of Pain.

There are sins it may be to discover,
There are deeds it may be to delight.
What new work wilt thou find for thy lover?
What new passions for daytime or night ?
What spells that they know not a word of
Whose lives are as leaves overblown ?
What tortures undreampt of, unheard of,
Unwritten, unknown ?

Ah beautiful passionate body
That never has ached with a heart !
On thy mouth though the kisses are bloody,
Though they sting till it shudder and smart,
More kind than the love we adore is,
They hurt not the heart or the brain,
O bitter and tender Dolores,
Our Lady of Pain.

As our kisses relax and redouble,
From the lips and the foam and the fangs
Shall no new sin be born for men's trouble,
No dream of impossible pangs ?
With the sweet of the sins of old ages
Wilt thou satiate thy soul as of yore ?
Too sweet is the rind, say the sages,
Too bitter the core.

Hast thou told all thy secrets the last time,
And bared all thy beauties to one?
Ah, where shall we go then for pastime,
If the worst that can be has been done ?
But sweet as the rind was the core is;
We are fain of thee still, we are fain,
O sanguine and subtle Dolores,
Our Lady of Pain.

By the hunger of change and emotion,
By the thirst of unbearable things,
By despair, the twin-born of devotion,
By the pleasure that winces and stings,
The delight that consumes the desire,
The desire that outruns the delight,
By the cruelty deaf as a fire
And blind as the night,

By the ravenous teeth that have smitten
Through the kisses that blossom and bud,
By the lips intertwisted and bitten
Till the foam has a savor of blood,
By the pulse as it rises and falters,
By the hands as they slacken and strain,
I adjure thee, respond from thine altars,
Our Lady of Pain.

Wilt thou smile as a woman disdaining
The light fire in the veins of a boy ?
But he comes to thee sad, without feigning,
Who has wearied of sorrow and joy;
Less careful of labor and glory
Than the elders whose hair has uncurled;
And young, but with fancies as hoary
And grey as the world.

I have passed from the outermost portal
To the shrine where a sin is a prayer;
What care though the service be mortal ?
O our lady of Torture, what care ?
All thine the last wine that I pour is,
The last in the chalice we drain,
O fierce and luxurious Dolores,
Our Lady of Pain.

All thine the new wine of desire,
The fruit of four lips as they clung
Till the hair and the eyelids took fire,
The foam of a serpentine tongue,
The froth of the serpents of pleasure,
More salt than the foam of the sea,
Now felt as a flame, now at leisure
As wine shed for me.

Ah thy people, thy children, thy chosen,
Marked cross from the womb and perverse !
They have found out the secret to cozen
The gods that constrain us and curse;
They alone, they are wise, and none other;
Give me place, even me, in their train,
O my sister, my spouse, and my mother,
Our Lady of Pain.

For the crown of our life as it closes
Is darkness, the fruit thereof dust;
No thorns go as deep as a rose's,

And love is more cruel than lust.
Time turns the old days to derision,
Our loves into corpses or wives;
And marriage and death and division
Make barren our lives.

And pale from the past we draw nigh thee
And satiate with comfortless hours;
And we know thee, how all men belie thee,
And we gather the fruit of thy flowers;
The passion that slays and recovers,
The pangs and the kisses that rain
On the lips and the limbs of thy lovers,
Our Lady of Pain.

The desire of thy furious embraces
Is more than the wisdom of years,
On the blossom though blood lie in traces,
Though the foliage be sodden with tears.
For the lords in whose keeping the door is
That opens on all who draw breath
Gave the cypress to love, my Dolores,
The myrtle to death.

And they laughed, changing hands in the measure,
And they mixed and made peace after strife;
Pain melted in tears, and was pleasure;
Death tingled with blood, and was life.
Like lovers they melted and tingled,
In the dusk of thine innermost fame;
In the darkness they murmured and mingled,
Our Lady of Pain.

In a twilight where virtues are vices,
In thy chapels, unknown of the sun,
To a tune that enthralls and entices,
They were wed, and the train were as one.
For the tune from thine altar hath sounded
Since God bade the world's work begin,
And the fume of thine incense abounded,
To sweeten the sin.

Love listens, and paler than ashes,
Through his curls as the crown on them slips,
Lifts languid wet eyelids and lashes,
And laughs with insatiable lips.
Thou shalt hush him with heavy caresses,
With music that scares the profane;
Thou shalt darken his eyes with thy tresses,
Our Lady of Pain.

Thou shalt blind his bright eyes though he wrestle,
Thou shalt chain his light limbs though he strive;
In his lips all thy serpents shall nestle,
In his hands all thy cruelties thrive.
In the daytime thy voice shall go through him,
In his dreams he shall feel thee and ache;
Thou shalt kindle by night and subdue him
Asleep and awake.

Thou shalt touch and make redder his roses
With juice not of fruit nor of bud;
When the sense in the spirit reposes,
Thou shalt quicken the soul through the blood.
Thine, thine the one grace we implore is,
Who would live and not languish or feign,
O sleepless and deadly Dolores,
Our Lady of Pain.

Dost thou dream, in a respite of slumber,
In a lull of the fires of thy life,
Of the days without name, without number,
When thy will stung the world into strife,
When, a goddess, the pulse of thy passion
Smote kings as they revelled in Rome;
And they hailed thee re-risen, O Thalassian,
Foam-white, from the foam?

When thy lips had such lovers to flatter,
When the city lay red from thy rods,
And thine hands were as arrows to scatter
The children of change and their gods;
When the blood of thy foemen made fervent
A sand never moist from the main,
As one smote them, their lord and thy servant,
Our Lady of Pain.

On sands by the storm never shaken,
Nor wet from the washing of tides;
Nor by foam of the waves overtaken,
Nor winds that the thunder bestrides;
But red from the print of thy paces,
Made smooth for the world and its lords,
Ringed round with a flame of fair faces,
And splendid with swords.

There the gladiator, pale for thy pleasure,
Drew bitter and perilous breath;
There torments laid hold on the treasure
Of limbs too delicious for death;
When thy gardens were lit with live torches;

When the world was a steed for thy rein:
When the nations lay prone in thy porches,
Our Lady of Pain.

When, with flame all around him aspirant,
Stood flushed, as a harp-player stands,
The implacable beautiful tyrant,
Rose-crowned, having death in his hands;
And a sound as the sound of loud water
Smote far through the flight of the fires,
And mixed with the lightning of slaughter
A thunder of lyres.

Dost thou dream of what was and no more is,
The old kingdoms of earth and the kings?
Dost thou hunger for these things, Dolores,
For these, in a world of new things?
But thy bosom no fasts could emaciate,
No hunger compel to complain
Those lips that no bloodshed could satiate,
Our Lady of Pain.

As of old when the world's heart was lighter,
Through thy garments the grace of thee glows,
The white wealth of thy body made whiter
By the blushes of amorous blows,
And seamed with sharp lips and fierce fingers,
And branded by kisses that bruise;
When all shall be gone that now lingers,
Ah, what shall we lose?

Thou wert fair in the fearless old fashion,
And thy limbs are as melodies yet,
And move to the music of passion
With lithe and lascivious regret,
What ailed us, O gods, to desert you
For creeds that refuse and restrain?
Come down and redeem us from virtue,
Our Lady of Pain.

All shrines that were Vestal are flameless;
But the flame has not fallen from this,
Though obscure be the god, and though nameless
The eyes and the hair that we kiss;
Low fires that love sits by and forges
Fresh heads for his arrows and thine;
Hair loosened and soiled in mid orgies
With kisses and wine.

Thy skin changes country and color,
And shrivels or swells to a snake's.
Let it brighten and bloat and grow duller,
We know it, the flames and the flakes,
Red brands on it smitten and bitten,
Round skies where a star is a stain,
And the leaves with thy litanies written,
Our Lady of Pain.

On thy bosom though many a kiss be,
There are none such as knew it of old.
Was it Alciphron once or Arisbe,
Male ringlets or feminine gold
That thy lips met with under the statue,
Whence a look shot out sharp after thieves
From the eyes of the garden god at you
Across the fig-leaves?

Then still, through dry seasons, and moister,
One god had a wreath to his shrine;
The love was the pearl of his oyster,*
And Venus rose red out of wine.
We have all done amiss, choosing rather
Such loves as the wise gods disdain;
Intercede for us thou with thy father,
Our Lady of Pain.

In spring he had crowns of his garden,
Red corn in the heat of the year,
Then hoary green olives that harden
When the grape-blossom freezes with fear;
And milk-budded myrtles with Venus
And vine-leaves with Bacchus he trod;
And ye said, "We have seen, he hath seen us,
A visible God."

What broke off the garlands that girt you?
What sundered you spirit and clay?
Weak sins yet alive are as virtue
To the strength of the sins of that day.
For dried is the blood of thy lover,
Ipsithilla, contracted the vein;
Cry aloud, "Will he rise and recover,
Our Lady of Pain?"

Cry aloud; for the old world is broken:
Cry out; for the Phrygian is priest,
And rears not the bountiful token
And spreads not the fatherly feast.

* "Nam te præcipuè in suis urbibus colit ora Hellespontia, cæteris ostreosior oris."
CATULL. *Carm* xviii

From the midmost of Ida, from shady
Recesses that murmur at morn,
They have brought and baptized her, Our Lady,
A goddess new-born.

And the chaplets of old are above us,
And the oyster-bed teems out of reach;
Old poets outsing and outlove us,
And Catullus makes mouths at our speech.
Who shall kiss, in thy father's own city,
With such lips as he sang with, again?
Intercede for us all of thy pity,
Our Lady of Pain.

Out of Dindymus heavily laden
Her lions draw bound and unfed
A mother, a mortal, a maiden,
A queen over death and the dead.
She is cold, and her habit is lowly,
Her temple of branches and sods;
Most fruitful and virginal, holy,
A mother of gods.

She hath wasted with fire thine high places,
She hath hidden and marred and made sad
The fair limbs of the Loves, the fair faces
Of gods that were goodly and glad.
She slays, and her hands are not bloody;
She moves as a moon in the wane,
White-robed, and thy raiment is ruddy,
Our Lady of Pain.

They shall pass and their places be taken,
The gods and the priests that are pure.
They shall pass, and shalt thou not be shaken?
They shall perish, and shalt thou endure?
Death laughs, breathing close and relentless
In the nostrils and eyelids of lust,
With a pinch in his fingers of scentless
And delicate dust.

But the worm shall revive thee with kisses,
Thou shalt change and transmute as a god,
As the rod to a serpent that hisses,
As the serpent again to a rod.
Thy life shall not cease though thou doff it;
Thou shalt live until evil be slain,
And good shall die first, said thy prophet,
Our Lady of Pain.

Did he lie? did he laugh? does he know it,
Now he lies out of reach, out of breath,
Thy prophet, thy preacher, thy poet,
Sin's child by incestuous Death?
Did he find out in fire at his waking,
Or discern as his eyelids lost light,
When the hands of the body were breaking
And all came in sight?

Who has known all the evil before us,
Or the tyrannous secrets of time?
Though we match not the dead men that bore us
At a song, at a kiss, at a crime—
Though the heathen outface and outlive us,
And our lives and our longings are twain—
Ah, forgive us our virtues, forgive us,
Our Lady of Pain.

Who are we that embalm and embrace thee
With spices and savors of song?
What is time, that his children should face thee;
What am I, that my lips do thee wrong?
I could hurt thee—but pain would delight thee;
Or caress thee—but love would repel;
And the lovers whose lips would excite thee
Are serpents in hell.

Who now shall content thee as they did,
Thy lovers, when temples were built
And the hair of the sacrifice braided
And the blood of the sacrifice spilt,
In Lampsacus fervent with faces,
In Aphaca red from thy reign,
Who embraced thee with awful embraces,
Our Lady of Pain?

Where are they, Cotytto or Venus,
Astarte or Ashtaroth, where?
Do their hands as we touch come between us?
Is the breath of them hot in thy hair?
From their lips have thy lips taken fever,
With the blood of their bodies grown red?
Hast thou left upon earth a believer
If these men are dead?

They were purple of raiment and golden,
Filled full of thee, fiery with wine,
Thy lovers, in haunts unbeholden,
In marvellous chambers of thine.
They are fled, and their footprints escape us,

Who appraise thee, adore, and abstain,
O daughter of Death and Priapus,
Our Lady of Pain.

What ails us to fear overmeasure,
To praise thee with timorous breath,
O mistress and mother of pleasure,
The one thing as certain as death?
We shall change as the things that we cherish,
Shall fade as they faded before,
As foam upon water shall perish
As sand upon shore

We shall know what the darkness discovers,
If the grave-pit be shallow or deep;
And our fathers of old, and our lovers,
We shall know if they sleep not or sleep
We shall see whether hell be not heaven,
Find out whether tares be not grain,
And the joys of thee seventy times seven.
Our Lady of Pain.

THE GARDEN OF PROSERPINE.

Here, where the world is quiet,
Here, where all trouble seems
Dead winds' and spent waves' riot
In doubtful dreams of dreams;
I watch the green field growing
For reaping folk and sowing,
For harvest time and mowing,
A sleepy world of streams.

I am tired of tears and laughter,
And men that laugh and weep
Of what may come hereafter
For men that sow to reap:
I am weary of days and hours,
Blown buds of barren flowers,
Desires and dreams and powers
And everything but sleep.

Here life has death for neighbor,
And far from eye or ear
Wan waves and wet winds labor,
Weak ships and spirits steer;
They drive adrift, and whither
They wot not who make thither;
But no such winds blow hither,
And no such things grow here.

No growth of moor or coppice,
No heather-flower or vine,
But bloomless buds of poppies,
Green grapes of Proserpine,
Pale beds of blowing rushes
Where no leaf blooms or blushes,
Save this whereout she crushes
For dead men deadly wine.

Pale, without name or number,
In fruitless fields of corn,
They bow themselves and slumber
All night till light is born;
And like a soul belated,
In hell and heaven unmated,
By cloud and mist abated
Comes out of darkness morn.

Though one were strong as seven,
He too with death shall dwell,
Nor wake with wings in heaven,
Nor weep for pains in hell;
Though one were fair as roses,
His beauty clouds and closes;
And well though love reposes,
In the end it is not well.

Pale, beyond porch and portal,
Crowned with calm leaves, she stands
Who gathers all things mortal
With cold immortal hands;

Her languid lips are sweeter
Than love's who fears to greet her
To men that mix and meet her
From many times and lands.

She waits for each and other,
She waits for all men born;
Forgets the earth her mother,
The life of fruits and corn;
And spring and seed and swallow
Take wing for her and follow
Where summer song rings hollow
And flowers are put to scorn.

There go the loves that wither,
The old loves with wearier wings;
And all dead years draw thither,
And all disastrous things;
Dead dreams of days forsaken
Blind buds that snows have shaken,
Wild leaves that winds have taken,
Red strays of ruined springs.

We are not sure of sorrow,
And joy was never sure;
To-day will die to-morrow;
Time stoops to no man's lure;
And love, grown faint and fretful
With lips but half regretful
Sighs, and with eyes forgetful
Weeps that no loves endure.

From too much love of living,
From hope and fear set free,
We thank with brief thanksgiving
Whatever gods may be
That no life lives for ever;
That dead men rise up never;
That even the weariest river
Winds somewhere safe to sea.

Then star nor sun shall waken,
Nor any change of light:
Nor sound of waters shaken,
Nor any sound or sight:
Nor wintry leaves nor vernal,
Nor days nor things diurnal;
Only the sleep eternal
In an eternal night.

HESPERIA.

OUT of the golden remote wild west where the sea without shore is,
Full of the sunset, and sad, if at all, with the fulness of joy,
As a wind sets in with the autumn that blows from the region of stories,
Blows with a perfume of songs and of memories beloved from a boy,
Blows from the capes of the past oversea to the bays of the present,
Filled as with shadow of sound with the pulse of invisible feet,
Far out to the shallows and straits of the future, by rough ways or pleasant,
Is it thither the wind's wings beat? is it hither to me, O my sweet?
For thee, in the stream of the deep tide-wind blowing in with the water,
Thee I behold as a bird borne in with the wind from the west,
Straight from the sunset, across white waves whence rose as a daughter
Venus thy mother, in years when the world was a water at rest.
Out of the distance of dreams, as a dream that abides after slumber,
Strayed from the fugitive flock of the night, when the moon overhead

Wanes in the wan waste heights of the heaven, and stars without number
Die without sound, and are spent like lamps that are burnt by the dead,

Comes back to me, stays by me, lulls me with touch of forgotten caresses,
One warm dream clad about with a fire as of life that endures;

The delight of thy face, and the sound of thy feet, and the wind of thy tresses,
And all of a man that regrets, and all of a maid that allures.

But thy bosom is warm for my face and profound as a manifold flower,
Thy silence as music, thy voice as an odor that fades in a flame;

Not a dream, not a dream is the kiss of thy mouth, and the bountiful hour
That makes me forget what was sin, and would make me forget were it shame.

Thine eyes that are quiet, thine hands that are tender, thy lips that are loving,
Comfort and cool me as dew in the dawn of a moon like a dream;

And my heart yearns baffled and blind, moved vainly toward thee, and moving
As the refluent seaweed moves in the languid exuberant stream,

Fair as a rose is on earth, as a rose under water in prison,
That stretches and swings to the slow passionate pulse of the sea,

Closed up from the air and the sun, but alive, as a ghost re-arisen,
Pale as the love that revives as a ghost re-arisen in me.

From the bountiful infinite west, from the happy memorial places
Full of the stately repose and the lordly delight of the dead,

Where the fortunate islands are lit with the light of ineffable faces,
And the sound of a sea without wind is about them, and sunset is red,

Come back to redeem and release me from love that recalls and represses,
That cleaves to my flesh as a flame, till the serpent has eaten his fill;

From the bitter delights of the dark, and the feverish, the furtive caresses
That murder the youth in a man or ever his heart have its will.

Thy lips cannot laugh and thine eyes cannot weep; thou art pale as a rose is,
Paler and sweeter than leaves that cover the blush of the bud;

And the heart of the flower is compassion, and pity the core it encloses,
Pity, not love, that is born of the breath and decays with the blood.

As the cross that a wild nun clasps till the edge of it bruises her bosom,
So love wounds as we grasp it, and blackens and burns as a flame;

I have loved overmuch in my life: when the live bud bursts with the blossom,
Bitter as ashes or tears is the fruit, and the wine thereof shame.

As a heart that its anguish divides is the green bud cloven asunder;
As the blood of a man self-slain is the flush of the leaves that allure;

And the perfume as poison and wine to the brain, a delight and a wonder;
And the thorns are too sharp for a boy; too slight for a man, to endure.

Too soon did I love it, and lost love's rose; and I cared not for glory's:
Only the blossoms of sleep and of pleasure were mixed in my hair.

Was it myrtle or poppy thy garland was woven with, O my Dolores?
Was it pallor or slumber, or blush as of blood, that I found in thee fair?

For desire is a respite from love, and the flesh not the heart is her fuel;
She was sweet to me once, who am fled and escaped from the rage of her reign;

Who behold as of old time at hand as I turn, with her mouth growing cruel,
And flushed as with wine with the blood of her lovers,
Our Lady of Pain.

Low down where the thicket is thicker with thorns than with leaves in the summer,
In the brake is a gleaming of eyes and a hissing of tongues that I knew;

And the lithe long throats of her snakes reach round her, their mouths overcome her,
And her lips grow cool with their foam, made moist as a desert with dew.

With the thirst and the hunger of lust though her beautiful lips be so bitter

With the cold foul foam of the snakes they soften and redden and smile;
And her fierce mouth sweetens, her eyes wax wide and her eyelashes glitter,
And she laughs with a savor of blood in her face, and a savor of guile.
She laughs, and her hands reach hither, her hair blows hither and hisses,
As a low-lit flame in a wind, back-blown till it shudder and leap;
Let her lips not again lay hold on my soul, nor her poisonous kisses,
To consume it alive and divide from thy bosom, Our Lady of Sleep.
Ah daughter of sunset and slumber, if now it return into prison,
Who shall redeem it anew? but we, if thou wilt, let us fly;
Let us take to us, now that the white skies thrill with a moon unarisen,
Swift horses of fear or of love, take flight and depart and not die.
They are swifter than dreams, they are stronger than death; there is none that hath ridden,
None that shall ride in the dim strange ways of his life as we ride:
By the meadows of memory, the highlands of hope, and the shore that is hidden,
Where life breaks loud and unseen, a sonorous invisible tide;
By the sands where sorrow has trodden, the salt pools bitter and sterile,
By the thundering reef and the low sea-wall and the channel of years,
Our wild steeds press on the night, strain hard through pleasure and peril,
Labor and listen and pant not or pause for the peril that nears;
And the sound of them trampling the way cleaves night as an arrow asunder,
And slow by the sand-hill and swift by the down with its glimpses of grass
Sudden and steady the music, as eight hoofs trample and thunder,
Rings in the ear of the low blind wind of the night as we pass;
Shrill shrieks in our faces the blind bland air that was mute as a maiden,
Stung into storm by the speed of our passage, and deaf where we past;
And our spirits too burn as we bound, thine holy but mine heavy-laden,
As we burn with the fire of our flight; ah, love, shall we win at the last?

LOVE AT SEA.

We are in love's land to-day;
Where shall we go?
Love, shall we start or stay,
Or sail or row?
There's many a wind and way,
And never a May but May;
We are in love's hand to-day;
Where shall we go?

Our landwind is the breath
Of sorrows kissed to death
And joys that were;
Our ballast is a rose;
Our way lies where God knows
And love knows where.
We are in love's hand to-day—

Our seamen are fledged Loves,
Our masts are bills of doves,
Our decks fine gold;
Our ropes are dead maids' hair,
Our stores are love-shafts fair
And manifold.
We are in love's land to-day—

Where shall we land you, sweet?
On fields of strange men's feet,
Or fields near home?
Or where the fire-flowers blow,
Or where the flowers of snow
Or flowers of foam?
We are in love's hand to-day—
Land me, she says, where love
Shows but one shaft, one dove,
One heart, one hand.
—A shore like that, my dear,
Lies where no man will steer,
No maiden land.

Imitated from Theophile Gautier.

APRIL

FROM THE FRENCH OF THE VIDAME DE CHARTRES.

12—?

When the fields catch flower
And the underwood is green,
And from bower unto bower
The songs of the birds begin,
I sing with sighing between.
When I laugh and sing,
I am heavy at heart for my sin;
I am sad in the spring
For my love that I shall not win,
For a foolish thing.

This profit I have of my woe,
That I know, as I sing,
I know he will needs have it so
Who is master and king,
Who is lord of the spirit of spring.
I will serve her and will not spare
Till her pity awake
Who is good, who is pure, who is fair,
Even her for whose sake
Love hath ta'en me and slain unaware.

O my Lord, O Love,
I have laid my life at thy feet;
Have thy will thereof,
Do as it please thee with it,
For what shall please thee is sweet.
I am come unto thee
To do thee service, O Love;
Yet cannot I see
Thou wilt take any pity thereof,
Any mercy on me.

But the grace I have long time sought
Comes never in sight,
If in her it abideth not,
Through thy mercy and might,
Whose heart is the world's delight.
Thou hast sworn without fail I shall die,
For my heart is set
On what hurts me, I wot not why,
But cannot forget
What I love, what I sing for and sigh.

She is worthy of praise,
For this grief of her giving is worth
All the joy of my days
That lie between death's day and birth
All the lordship of things upon earth.
Nay, what have I said?
I would not be glad if I could;
My dream and my dread
Are of her, and for her sake I would
That my life were fled.

Lo, sweet, if I durst not pray to you,
Then were I dead;
If I sang not a little to say to you,
(Could it be said)
O my love, how my heart would be fed;

Ah sweet who hast hold of my heart
For thy love's sake I live,
Do but tell me, ere either depart,
What a lover may give
For a woman so fair as thou art.
The lovers that disbelieve,
False rumors shall grieve
And evil-speaking shall part.

BEFORE PARTING.

A MONTH or twain to live on honeycomb
Is pleasant; but one tires of scented time,
Cold sweet recurrence of accepted rhyme,
And that strong purple under juice and foam
Where the wine's heart has burst;
Nor feel the latter kisses like the first.

Once yet, this poor one time; I will not pray
Even to change the bitterness of it,
The bitter taste ensuing on the sweet,
To make your tears fall where your soft hair lay
All blurred and heavy in some perfumed wise
Over my face and eyes.

And yet who knows what end the scythed wheat
Makes of its foolish poppies' mouths of red?
These were not sown, these are not harvested,
They grow a month and are cast under feet
And none has care thereof,
As none has care of a divided love.

I know each shadow of your lips by rote,
Each change of love in eyelids and eyebrows;
The fashion of fair temples tremulous
With tender blood, and color of your throat;
I know not how love is gone out of this,
Seeing that all was his.

Love's likeness there endures upon all these:
But out of these one shall not gather love.
Day hath not strength nor the night shade enough
To make love whole and fill his lips with ease,
As some bee-builded cell
Feels at filled lips the heavy honey swell.

I know not how this last month leaves your hair
Less full of purple color and hid spice,
And that luxurious trouble of closed eyes
Is mixed with meaner shadow and waste care;
And love, kissed out by pleasure, seems not yet
Worth patience to regret.

THE SUNDEW.

A LITTLE marsh-plant, yellow green,
And pricked at lip with tender red.
Tread close, and either way you tread
Some faint black water jets between
Lest you should bruise the curious head.

A live thing may be; who shall know?
The summer knows and suffers it;
For the cool moss is thick and sweet
Each side, and saves the blossom so
That it lives out the long June heat.

The deep scent of the heather burns
About it; breathless though it be,
Bow down and worship; more than we,
Is the least flower whose life returns,
Least weed renascent in the sea.

We are vexed and cumbered in earth's sight
With wants, with many memories;
These see their mother what she is,
Glad-growing, till August leave more bright
The apple-colored cranberries.

Wind blows and bleaches the strong grass,
Blown all one way to shelter it
From trample of strayed kine, with feet
Felt heavier than the moorhen was,
Strayed up past patches of wild wheat

You call it sundew: how it grows,
If with its color it have breath,
If life taste sweet to it, if death
Pain its soft petal, no man knows:
Man has no sight or sense that saith.

My sundew, grown of gentle days,
In these green miles the spring begun
Thy growth ere April had half done
With the soft secret of her ways
Or June made ready for the sun.

O red-lipped mouth of marsh-flower,
I have a secret halved with thee.
The name that is love's name to me
Thou knowest, and the face of her
Who is my festival to see.

The hard sun, as thy petals knew,
Colored the heavy moss-water:
Thou wert not worth green midsummer
Nor fit to live to August blue,
O sundew, not remembering her.

FÉLISE.

Mais où sont les neiges d'antan.

WHAT shall be said between us here,
Among the downs, between the trees,
In fields that knew our feet last year,
In sight of quiet sands and seas,
This year, Félisé?

Who knows what word were best to say?
For last year's leaves lie dead and red
On this sweet day, in this green May,
And barren corn makes bitter bread.
What shall be said?

Here as last year the fields begin,
A fire of flowers and glowing grass;
The old fields we laughed and lingered in,
Seeing each our souls in last year's glass,
Félisé, alas!

Shall we not laugh, shall we not weep,
Not we, though this be as it is?
For love awake or love asleep
Ends in a laugh, a dream, a kiss,
A song like this.

I that have slept awake, and you
Sleep, who last year were well awake.
Though love do all that love can do,
My heart will never ache or break
For your heart's sake.

The great sea, faultless as a flower,
Throbs, trembling under beam and breeze,
And laughs with love of the amorous hour.
I found you fairer once, Félise,
Than flowers or seas.

We played at bondsman and at queen;
But as the days change men change too;
I find the grey sea's notes of green,
The green sea's fervent flakes of blue,
More fair than you.

Your beauty is not over fair
Now in mine eyes, who am grown up wise.
The smell of flowers in all your hair
Allures not now; no sigh replies
If your heart sighs.

But you sigh seldom, you sleep sound,
You find love's new name good enough.
Less sweet I find it than I found
The sweetest name that ever love
Grew weary of.

My snake with bright bland eyes, my snake
Grown tame and glad to be caressed.
With lips athirst for mine to slake
Their tender fever! who had guessed
You loved me best?

I had died for this last year, to know
You loved me. Who shall turn on fate?
I care not if love come or go
Now, though your love seek mine for mate.
It is too late.

The dust of many strange desires
Lies deep between us; in our eyes
Dead smoke of perishable fires
Flickers, a fume in air and skies,
A steam of sighs.

You loved me and you loved me not;
A little, much, and overmuch.
Will you forget as I forgot?
Let all dead things lie dead; none such
Are soft to touch.

I love you and I do not love,
Too much, a little, not at all;
Too much, and never yet enough.
Birds quick to fledge and fly at call
Are quick to fall.

And these love longer now than men,
And larger loves than ours are these.
No diver brings up love again
Dropped once, my beautiful Félise,
In such cold seas.

Gone deeper than all plummets sound,
Where in the dim green dayless day
The life of such dead thing lies bound
As the sea feeds on, wreck and stray
And castaway.

Can I forget? yea, that can I,
And that can all men; so will you,
Alive, or later, when you die,
Ah, but the love you plead was true?
Was mine not too?

I loved you for that name of yours
Long ere we met, and long enough.
Now that one thing of all endures—
The sweetest name that ever love
Waxed weary of.

Like colors in the sea, like flowers,
Like a cat's splendid circled eyes
That wax and wane with love for hours,
Green as green flame, blue-grey like skies,
And soft like sighs—

And all these only like your name,
And your name full of all of these.
I say it, and it sounds the same—
Save that I say it now at ease,
Your name, Félise.

I said "she must be swift and white
And subtly warm, and half perverse
And sweet like sharp soft fruit to bite,
And like a snake's love lithe and fierce."
Men have guessed worse.

What was the song I made of you
Here where the grass forgets our feet
As afternoon forgets the dew?
Ah that such sweet things should be fleet,
Such fleet things sweet!

As afternoon forgets the dew,
As time in time forgets all men,
As our old place forgets us two,
Who might have turned to one thing then,
But not again.

O lips that mine have grown into
Like April's kissing May,
O fervent eyelids letting through
Those eyes the greenest of things blue,
The bluest of things grey,

If you were I and I were you,
How could I love you, say?
How could the roseleaf love the rue,
The day love nightfall and her dew,
Though night may love the day?

You loved it may be more than I;
We know not; love is hard to seize,
And all things are not good to try;
And lifelong loves the worst of these
For us, Félise.

Ah, take the season and have done,
Love well the hour and let it go:
Two souls may sleep and wake up one,
Or dream they wake and find it so,
And then—you know.

Kiss me once hard as though a flame
Lay on my lips and made them fire;
The same lips now, and not the same;
What breath shall fill and re-inspire
A dead desire?

The old song sounds hollower in mine ear
Than thin keen sounds of dead men's speech—
A noise one hears and would not hear;
Too strong to die, too weak to reach
From wave to beach.

We stand on either side the sea,
Stretch hands, blow kisses, laugh and lean
I toward you, you toward me;
But what hears either save the keen
Grey sea between?

A year divides us, love from love,
Though you loved now, though I loved then.
The gulf is strait, but deep enough;
Who shall recross, who among men
Shall cross again?

Love was a jest last year, you said,
And what lives surely, surely dies.
Even so; but now that love is dead,
Shall love rekindle from wet eyes,
From subtle sighs?

For many loves are good to see;
Mutable loves, and loves perverse;
But there is nothing, nor shall be,
So sweet, so wicked, but my verse
Can dream of worse.

For we that sing and you that love
Know that which man may, only we.
The rest live under us; above,
Live the great gods in heaven, and see
What things shall be.

So this thing is and must be so;
For man dies, and love also dies.
Though yet love's ghost moves to and fro
The sea-green mirrors of your eyes,
And laughs, and lies.

Eyes colored like a water-flower,
And deeper than the green sea's glass;
Eyes that remember one sweet hour—
In vain we swore it should not pass;
In vain, alas!

Ah my Félise, if love or sin,
If shame or fear could hold it fast,
Should we not hold it? Love wears thin,
And they laugh well who laugh the last.
Is it not past?

The gods, the gods are stronger; time
Falls down before them, all men's knees
Bow, all men's prayers and sorrows climb
Like incense towards them; yea, for these
Are gods, Félise.

Immortal are they, clothed with powers,
Not to be comforted at all;
Lords over all the fruitless hours;
Too great to appease, too high to appal
Too far to call.

For none shall move the most high gods,
Who are most sad, being cruel; none
Shall break or take away the rods
Wherewith they scourge us, not as one
That smites a son.

By many a name of many a creed
We have called upon them, since the sands
Fell through time's hour-glass first, a seed
Of life: and out of many lands
Have we stretched hands.

When have they heard us? who hath known
Their faces, climbed unto their feet,
Felt them and found them? Laugh or groan,
Doth heaven remurmur and repeat
Sad sounds or sweet?

Do the stars answer? in the night
Have ye found comfort? or by day
Have ye seen gods? What hope, what light,
Falls from the farthest starriest way
On you that pray?

Are the skies wet because we weep,
Or fair because of any mirth?
Cry out; they are gods; perchance they sleep;
Cry; thou shalt know what prayers are worth,
Thou dust and earth.

O earth, thou art fair; O dust, thou art great,
O laughing lips and lips that mourn,
Pray, till ye feel the exceeding weight
Of God's intolerable scorn,
Not to be borne.

Behold, there is no grief like this;
The barren blossom of thy prayer,
Thou shalt find out how sweet it is.
O fools and blind, what seek ye there,
High up in the air?

Ye must have gods, the friends of men,
Merciful gods, compassionate,
And these shall answer you again.
Will ye beat always at the gate,
Ye fools of fate?

Ye fools and blind; for this is sure,
That all ye shall not live, but die.
Lo, what thing have ye found endure?
Or what thing have have ye found on high
Past the blind sky?

The ghosts of words and dusty dreams,
Old memories, faiths infirm and dead.
Ye fools; for which among you deems
His prayer can alter green to red
Or stones to bread?

Why should ye bear with hopes and fears
Till all these things be drawn in one,
The sound of iron-footed years,
And all the oppression that is done
Under the sun?

Ye might end surely, surely pass
Out of the multitude of things,
Under the dust, beneath the grass,
Deep in dim death, where no thought stings,
No record clings.

No memory more of love or hate,
No trouble, nothing that aspires,
No sleeplesss labor thwarting fate,
And thwarted; where no travail tires,
Where no faith fires.

All passes, nought that has been is,
Things good and evil have one end.
Can anything be otherwise
Though all men swear all things would mend
With God to friend?

Can ye beat off one wave with prayer,
Can ye move mountains? bid the flower
Take flight and turn to a bird in the air?
Can ye hold fast for shine or shower
One wingless hour?

Ah sweet, and we too, can we bring
One sigh back, bid one smile revive?
Can God restore one ruined thing,
Or he who slays our souls alive
Make dead things thrive?

Two gifts perforce he has given us yet,
Though sad things stay and glad things fly;
Two gifts he has given us, to forget
All glad and sad things that go by,
And then to die.

We know not whether death be good,
But life at least it will not be:
Men will stand saddening as we stood,
Watch the same fields and skies as we
And the same sea.

Let this be said between us here,
One love grows green when one turns grey;
This year knows nothing of last year:
To-morrow has no more to say
To yesterday.

Live and let live, as I will do,
Love and let love, and so will I.
But, sweet, for me no more with you:
Not while I live, not though I die.
Good-night, good-bye.

AN INTERLUDE.

In the greenest growth of the Maytime,
I rode where the woods were wet,
Between the dawn and the daytime;
The spring was glad that we met.

There was something the season wanted,
Though the ways and the woods smelt sweet;
The breath at your lips that panted,
The pulse of the grass at your feet.

You came, and the sun came after,
And the green grew golden above;
And the flag-flowers lightened with laughter,
And the meadow sweet shook with love.

Your feet in the full-grown grasses
Moved soft as a weak wind blows;
You passed me as April passes,
With face made out of a rose.

By the stream where the stems were slender,
Your bright foot paused at the sedge;
It might be to watch the tender
Light leaves in the springtime hedge.

On boughs that the sweet month blanches,
With flowery frost of May:
It might be a bird in the branches,
It might be a thorn in the way.

I waited to watch you linger
With foot drawn back from the dew,
Till a sunbeam straight like a finger
Struck sharp through the leaves at you

And a bird overhead sang *Follow*,
And a bird to the right sang *Here*;
And the arch of the leaves was hollow,
And the meaning of May was clear.

I saw where the sun's hand pointed,
I knew what the bird's note said;
By the dawn and the dewfall anointed,
You were queen by the gold on your head.

As the glimpse of a burnt-out ember
Recalls a regret of the sun,
I remember, forget, and remember
What Love saw done and undone.

I remember the way we parted,
The day and the way we met;
You hoped we were both broken-hearted,
And knew we should both forget.

And May with her world in flower
Seemed still to murmur and smile
As you murmured and smiled for an hour;
I saw you turn at the stile.

A hand like a white wood-blossom
You lifted, and waved, and passed,
With head hung down to the bosom,
And pale, as it seemed, at last.

And the best and the worst of this is
That neither is most to blame
If you've forgotten my kisses
And I've forgotten your name.

HENDECASYLLABICS.

In the month of the long decline of roses
I, beholding the summer dead before me,
Set my face to the sea and journeyed silent,
Gazing eagerly where above the sea-mark
Flame as fierce as the fervid eyes of lions
Half divided the eyelids of the sunset;
Till I heard as it were a noise of waters
Moving tremulous under feet of angels
Multitudinous, out of all the heavens;
Knew the fluttering wind, the fluttered foliage,
Shaken fitfully, full of sound and shadow;
And saw, trodden upon by noiseless angels,
Long mysterious reaches fed with moonlight,
Sweet sad straits in a soft subsiding channel,
Blown about by the lips of winds I knew not,
Winds not born in the north nor any quarter,
Winds not warm with the south nor any sunshine;
Heard between them a voice of exultation,
"Lo, the summer is dead, the sun is faded,
Even like as a leaf the year is withered,
All the fruits of the day from all her branches
Gathered, neither is any left to gather.
All the flowers are dead, the tender blossoms,
All are taken away; the season wasted,
Like an ember among the fallen ashes.
Now with light of the winter days, with moonlight,
Light of snow, and the bitter light of hoar-frost,
We bring flowers that fade not after autumn
Pale white chaplets and crowns of latter seasons,
Fair false leaves (but the summer leaves were falser,)
Woven under the eyes of stars and planets
When low light was upon the windy reaches
Where the flower of foam was blown, a lily
Dropt among the sonorous fruitless furrows
And green fields of the sea that make no pasture:
Since the winter begins, the weeping winter,
All whose flowers are tears, and round his temples
Iron blossom of frost is bound for ever."

SAPPHICS.

All the night sleep came not upon my eyelids,
Shed not dew, nor shook nor unclosed a feather,
Yet with lips shut close and with eyes of iron
Stood and beheld me.

Then to me so lying awake a vision
Came without sleep over the seas and touched me,
Softly touched mine eyelids and lips; and I too,
Full of the vision,

Saw the white implacable Aphrodite,
Saw the hair unbound, and the feet unsandalled
Shine as fire of sunset on western waters;
Saw the reluctant

Feet, the straining plumes of the doves that drew her,
Looking always, looking with necks reverted,
Back to Lesbos, back to the hills whereunder
Shone Mitylene;

Heard the flying feet of the Loves behind her
Make a sudden thunder upon the waters,
As the thunder flung from the strong unclosing
Wings of a great wind.

So the goddess fled from her place, with awful
Sound of feet and thunder of wings around her;
While behind a clamour of singing women
Severed the twilight.

Ah the singing, ah the delight, the passion!
All the Loves wept, listening; sick with anguish,
Stood the crowned nine Muses about Apollo;
Fear was upon them,

While the tenth sang wonderful things they knew not.
Ah the tenth, the Lesbian ! the nine were silent,
None endured the sound of her song for weeping;
Laurel by laurel,

Faded all their crowns; but about her forehead,
Round her woven tresses and ashen temples
White as dead snow, paler than grass in summer,
Ravaged with kisses,

Shone a light of fire as a crown for ever.
Yea, almost the implacable Aphrodite
Paused, and almost wept; such a song was that song,
Yea, by her name too

Called her, saying, "Turn to me, O my Sappho;"
Yet she turned her face from the Loves, she saw not
Tears or laughter darken immortal eyelids,
Heard not about her

Fearful fitful wings of the doves departing,
Saw not how the bosom of Aphrodite
Shook with weeping, saw not her shaken raiment,
Saw not her hands wrung;

Saw the Lesbians kissing across their smitten
Lutes with lips more sweet than the sound of lute-strings,
Mouth to mouth and hand upon hand, her chosen,
Fairer than all men;

Only saw the beautiful lips and fingers,
Full of songs and kisses and little whispers,
Full of music; only beheld among them
Soar, as a bird soars

Newly fledged, her visible song, a marvel,
Made of perfect sound and exceeding passion,
Sweetly shapen, terrible, full of thunders,
Clothed with the wind's wings.

Then rejoiced she, laughing with love, and scattered
Roses, awful roses of holy blossom;
Then the Loves thronged sadly with hidden faces
Round Aphrodite,

Then the Muses, stricken at heart, were silent;
Yea, the gods waxed pale; such a song was that song.
All reluctant, all with a fresh repulsion,
Fled from before her.

All withdrew long since, and the land was barren,
Full of fruitless women and music only.
Now perchance, when winds are assuaged at sunset,
Lulled at the dewfall,

the grey sea-side, unassuaged, unheard of,
Unbeloved, unseen in the ebb of twilight,
Ghosts of outcast women return lamenting,
Purged not in Lethe,
Clothed about with flame and with tears, and singing
Songs that move the heart of the shaken heaven,
Songs that break the heart of the earth with pity,
Hearing, to hear them.

AT ELEUSIS.

MEN of Eleusis, ye that with long staves
Sit in the market-houses, and speak words
Made sweet with wisdom as the rare wine is
Thickened with honey; and ye sons of these
Who in the glad thick streets go up and down
For pastime or grave traffic or mere chance;
And all fair women having rings of gold
On hands or hair; and chiefest over these
I name you, daughters of this man the king,
Who dipping deep smooth pitchers of pure brass
Under the bubbled wells, till each round lip
Stooped with loose gurgle of waters incoming,
Found me an old sick woman, lamed and lean,
Beside a growth of builded olive boughs
Whence multiplied thick song of thick-plumed throats—
Also wet tears filled up my hollow hands
By reason of my crying into them—
And pitied me; for as cold water ran
And washed the pitchers full from lip to lip,
So washed both eyes full the strong salt of tears.
And ye put water to my mouth, made sweet
With brown hill-berries; so in time I spoke
And gathered my loose knees from under me.
Moreover in the broad fair halls this month
Have I found space and bountiful abode
To please me. I Demeter speak of this,
Who am the mother and the mate of things:
For as ill men by drugs or singing words
Shut the doors inward of the narrowed womb
Like a lock bolted with round iron through,
Thus I shut up the body and sweet mouth
Of all soft pasture and the tender land,
So that no seed can enter in by it
Though one sow thickly, nor some grain get out
Past the hard clods men cleave and bite with steel
To widen the sealed lips of them for use.
None of you is there in the peopled street
But knows how all the dry-drawn furrows ache
With no green spot made count of in the black:
How the wind finds no comfortable grass
Nor is assuaged with bud nor breath of herbs;
And in hot autumn when ye house the stacks,
All fields are helpless in the sun, all trees
Stand as a man stripped out of all but skin.
Nevertheless ye sick have help to get
By means and stablished ordinance of God;
For God is wiser than a good man is.
But never shall new grass be sweet in earth
Till I get righted of my wound and wrong
By changing counsel of ill-minded Zeus.
For of all other gods is none save me
Clothed with like power to build and break the year.
I make the lesser green begin, when spring
Touches not earth but with one fearful foot;
And as a careful gilder with grave art
Soberly colors and completes the face,

Mouth, chin and all, of some sweet work in stone,
I carve the shapes of grass and tender corn
And color the ripe edges and long spikes
With the red increase and the grace of gold.
No tradesman in soft wools is cunninger
To kill the secret of the fat white fleece
With stains of blue and purple wrought in it.
Three moons were made and three moons burnt away
While I held journey hither out of Crete
Comfortless, tended by grave Hecate
Whom my wound stung with double iron point:
For all my face was like a cloth wrung out
With close and weeping wrinkles, and both lids
Sodden with salt continuance of tears.
For Hades and the sidelong will of Zeus
And that lame wisdom that has writhen feet,
Cunning, begotten in the bed of Shame,
These three took evil will at me, and made
Such counsel that when time got wing to fly
This Hades out of summer and low fields
Forced the bright body of Persephone:
Out of pure grass, where she lying down, red flowers
Made their sharp little shadows on her sides,
Pale heat, pale color on pale maiden flesh—
And chill water slid over her reddening feet,
Killing the throbs in their soft blood; and birds,
Perched next her elbow and pecking at her hair,
Stretched their necks more to see her than even to sing.
A sharp thing is it I have need to say;
For Hades holding both white wrists of hers
Unloosed the girdle and with knot by knot
Bound her between his wheels upon the seat,
Bound her pure body, holiest yet and dear
To me and God as always, clothed about
With blossoms loosened as her knees went down,
Let fall as she let go of this and this
By tens and twenties, tumbled to her feet,
White waifs or purple of the pasturage.
Therefore with only going up and down
My feet were wasted, and the gracious air,
To me discomfortable and dun, became
As weak smoke blowing in the under world.
And finding in the process of ill days
What part had Zeus herein and how as mate
He coped with Hades, yokefellow in sin,
I set my lips against the meat of gods
And drank not, neither ate nor slept in heaven.
Nor in the golden greeting of their mouths
Did ear take note of me, nor eye at all
Track my feet going in the ways of them.
Like a great fire on some strait slip of land
Between two washing inlets of wet sea
That burns the grass up to each lip of beach
And strengthens, waxing in the growth of wind
So burnt my soul in me at heaven and earth,
Each way a ruin and a hungry plague,
Visible evil; nor could any night
Put cool between mine eyelids, nor the sun
With competence of gold fill out my want.
Yea so my flame burnt up the grass and stones,
Shone to the salt-white edges of thin sea,
Distempered all the gracious work, and made
Sick change, unseasonable increase of days
And scant avail of seasons; for by this
The fair gods faint in hollow heaven: there comes
No taste of burnings of the twofold fat
To leave their palates smooth, nor in their lips
Soft rings of smoke and weak scent wandering;
All cattle waste and rot, and their ill smell
Grows alway from the lank unsavory flesh,
That no man slays for offering; the sea
And waters moved beneath the heath and corn
Preserve the people of fin-twinkling fish,
And river-flies feed thick upon the smooth;
But all earth over is no man or bird
(Except the sweet race of the kingfisher)
That lacks not and is wearied with much loss.
Meantime the purple inward of the house
Was softened with all grace of scent and sound
In ear and nostril perfecting my praise;
Faint grape-flowers and cloven honey-cake
And the just grain with dues of the shed salt

Made me content: yet my hand loosened not
Its gripe upon your harvest all year long.
While I, thus woman-muffled in wan flesh
And waste externals of a perished face,
Preserved the levels of my wrath and love
Patiently ruled; and with soft offices
Cooled the sharp noons and busied the warm nights
In care of this my choice, this child my choice,
Triptolemus, the king's selected son:
That this fair yearlong body, which hath grown
Strong with strange milk upon the mortal lip
And nerved with half a god, might so increase
Outside the bulk and the bare scope of man:
And waxen over large to hold within
Base breath of yours and this impoverished air,
I might exalt him past the flame of stars,
The limit and walled reach of the great world.
Therefore my breast made common to his mouth
Immortal savors, and the taste whereat
Twice their hard life strains out the colored veins
And twice its brain confirms the narrow shell.
Also at night, unwinding cloth from cloth
As who unhusks an almond to the white
And pastures curiously the purer taste,
I bared the gracious limbs and the soft feet,
Unswaddled the weak hands, and in mid ash
Laid the sweet flesh of either feeble side,
More tender for impressure of some touch
Than wax to any pen; and lit around
Fire, and made crawl the white worm-shapen flame,
And leap in little angers spark by spark
At head at once and feet; and the faint hair
Hissed with rare sprinkles in the closer curl,
And like scaled oarage of a keen thin fish
In sea-water, so in pure fire his feet
Struck out, and the flame bit not in his flesh
But like a kiss it curled his lip, and heat
Fluttered his eyelids; so each night I blew
The hot ash red to purge him to full god.
Ill is it when fear hungers in the soul
For painful food, and chokes thereon, being fed;
And ill slant eyes interpret the straight sun,
But in their scope its white is wried to black:
By the queen Metaneira mean I this;
For with sick wrath upon her lips and heart,
Narrowing with fear the spleenful passages,
She thought to thread this webs's fine ravel out,
Nor leave her shuttle split in combing it;
Therefore she stole on us, and with hard sight
Peered, and stooped close; then with pale open mouth
As the fire smote her in the eyes between
Cried, and the child's laugh sharply shortening
As fire doth under rain, fell off; the flame
Writhed once all through and died, and in thick dark
Tears fell from mine on the child's weeping eyes,
Eyes dispossessed of strong inheritance
And mortal fallen anew. Who not the less
From bud of beard to pale-grey flower of hair
Shall wax vinewise to a lordly vine, whose grapes
Bleed the red heavy blood of swoln soft wine,
Subtle with sharp leaves' intricacy, until
Full of white years and blossom of hoary days
I take him perfected; for whose one sake
I am thus gracious to the least who stands
Filleted with white wool and girt upon
As he whose prayer endures upon the lip
And falls not waste: wherefore let sacrifice
Burn and run red in all the wider ways:
Seeing I have sworn by the pale temples' band
And poppied hair of gold Persephone
Sad-tressed and pleached low down about her brows,
And by the sorrow in her lips and death
Her dumb and mournful-mouthed minister,
My word for you is eased of its harsh weight
And doubled with soft promise; and your king
Triptolemus, this Celeus dead and swathed
Purple and pale for golden burial,
Shall be your helper in my services,
Dividing earth and eaping fruits thereof

In fields where wait, well girt, well-wreathen, all
The heavy-handed seasons all year through;
Saving the choice of warm spear-headed grain,
And stooping sharp to the slant-sided share
All beasts that furrow the remeasured land
With their bowed necks of burden equable.

AUGUST

THERE were four apples on the bough,
Half gold half red, that one might know
The blood was ripe inside the core;
The color of the leaves was more
Like stems of yellow corn that grow
Through all the gold June meadow's floor.

The warm smell of the fruit was good
To feed on, and the split green wood,
With all its bearded lips and stains
Of mosses in the cloven veins,
Most pleasant, if one lay or stood
In sunshine or in happy rains.

There were four apples on the tree,
Red stained through gold, that all might see
The sun went warm from core to rind;
The green leaves made the summer blind
In that soft place they kept for me
With golden apples shut behind.

The leaves caught gold across the sun
And where the bluest air begun,
Thirsted for song to help the heat;
As I to feel my lady's feet
Draw close before the day were done;
Both lips grew dry with dreams of it.

In the mute August afternoon
They trembled to some undertune
Of music in the silver air;
Great pleasure was it to be there
Till green turned duskier and the moon
Colored the corn-sheaves like gold hair.

That August time it was delight
To watch the red moons wane to white
'Twixt grey seamed stems of apple-trees;
A sense of heavy harmonies
Grew on the growth of patient night,
More sweet than shapen music is.

But some three hours before the moon
The air, still eager from the noon,
Flagged after heat, not wholly dead;
Against the stem I leant my head;
The color soothed me like a tune,
Green leaves all round the gold and red.

I lay there till the warm smell grew
More sharp, when flecks of yellow dew
Between the round ripe leaves had blurred
The rind with stain and wet; I heard
A wind that blew and breathed and blew,
Too weak to alter its one word.

The wet leaves next the gentle fruit
Felt smoother, and the brown tree-root
Felt the mould warmer: I too felt
(As water feels the slow gold melt
Right through it when the day burns mute)
The peace of time wherein love dwelt.

There were four apples on the tree,
Gold stained on red that all might see
The sweet blood filled them to the core:
The color of her hair is more
Like stems of fair faint gold, that be
Mown from the harvest's middle-floor

A CHRISTMAS CAROL.*

THREE damsels in the queen's chamber,
The queen's mouth was most fair;
She spake a word of God's mother
As the combs went in her hair.
Mary that is of might,
Bring us to thy Son's sight.

They held the gold combs out from her,
A span's length off her head;
She sang this song of God's mother
And of her bearing-bed
Mary most full of grace.
Bring us to thy Son's face.

When she sat at Joseph's hand,
She looked against her side;
And either way from the short silk band
Her girdle was all wried.
Mary that all good may,
Bring us to thy Son's way.

Mary had three women for her bed,
The twain were maiden's clean;
The first of them had white and red,
The third had riven green.
Mary that is so sweet,
Bring us to thy Son's feet.

She had three women for her hair,
Two were gloved soft and shod;
The third had feet and fingers bare,
She was the likest God.
Mary that wieldeth land,
Bring us to thy Son's hand.

She had three woman for her ease,
The twain were good women:
The first two were the two Maries,
The third was Magdalen.
Mary that perfect is,
Bring us to thy Son's kiss.

Joseph had three workmen in his stall,
To serve him well upon;
The first of them were Peter and Paul,
The third of them was John.
Mary, God's handmaiden,
Bring us to thy Son's ken.

"If your child be none other man's,
But if it be very mine,
The bedstead shall be gold two spans,
The bedfoot silver fine."
Mary that made God mirth,
Bring us to thy Son's birth.

"If the child be some other man's
And if it be none of mine,
The manger shall be straw two spans,
Betwixen kine and kine."
Mary that made sin cease,
Bring us to thy Son's peace.

Christ was born upon this wise,
It fell on such a night,
Neither with sounds of psalteries
Nor with fire for light.
Mary that is God's spouse,
Bring us to thy Son's house.

The star came out upon the east
With a great sound and sweet:
Kings gave gold to make him feast
And myrrh for him to eat.
Mary, of thy sweet mood,
Bring us to thy Son's good.

He had two handmaids at his head,
One handmaid at his feet;
The twain of them were fair and red
The third one was right sweet.
Mary that is most wise,
Bring us to thy Son's eyes. Amen.

* Suggested by a drawing of Mr. D. G. Rossetti's.

THE MASQUE OF QUEEN BERSABE.

A MIRACLE-PLAY

KING DAVID.

KNIGHTS mine, all that be in hall,
I have a council to you all,
Because of this thing God lets fall
Among us for a sign.
For some days hence as I did eat
From kingly dishes my good meat,
There flew a bird between my feet
As red as any wine.
This bird had a long bill of red
And a gold ring above his head;
Long time he sat and nothing said,
Put softly down his neck and fed
From the gilt patens fine:
And as I marvelled at the last
He shut his two keen eyën fast
And suddenly woxe big and brast
Ere one should tell to nine.

PRIMUS MILES.

Sir, note this that I will say;
That Lord who maketh corn with hay
And morrows each of yesterday,
He hath you in his hand.

SECUNDUS MILES (*Paganus quidam*).

By Satan I hold no such thing;
For if wine swell within a king
Whose ears for drink are hot and ring,
The same shall dream of wine-bibbing
Whilst he can lie or stand.

QUEEN BERSABE.

Peace now, lords, for God is head.
Ye chirk as starlings that be fed
And gape as fishes newly dead;
The devil put your bones to bed,
Lo, this is all to say.

SECUNDUS MILES.

By Mahound, lords, I have good will
This devil's bird to wring and spill;
For now meseems our game goes ill,
Ye have scant hearts to play.

TERTIUS MILES.

Lo, sirs, this word is there said,
That Urias the knight is dead
Through some ill craft; by Poulis head,
I doubt his blood hath made so red
This bird that flew from the queen's bed
Whereof ye have such fear.

KING DAVID.

Yea, my good knave, and is it said
That I can raise men from the dead?
By God I think to have his head
Who saith words of my lady's bed
For any thief to hear.
Et percutiat eum in capite.

QUEEN BERSABE.

I wis men shall spit at me,
And say it were but right for thee
That one should hang thee on a tree;
Ho! it were a fair thing to see
The big stones bruise her false body;
Fie! who shall see her dead?

KING DAVID.

I rede you have no fear of this.
For as ye wot, the first good kiss
I had must be the last of his;
Now are ye queen of mine, I wis,
And lady of a house that is
Full rich of meat and bread

PRIMUS MILES.

I bid you make good cheer to be
So fair a queen as all men see.
And hold us for your lieges free;
By Peter's soul that hath the key,
Ye have good hap of it.

SECUNDUS MILES.

I would that he were hanged and dead
Who hath no joy to see your head
With gold about it, barred on red;
I hold him as a sow of lead
That is so scant of wit.

Tunc dicat NATHAN *propheta.*

O king, I have a word to thee;
The child that is in Bersabe
Shall wither without light to see;
This word is come of God by me
For sin that ye have done.
Because herein ye did not right,
To take the fair one lamb to smite
That was of Urias the knight;
Ye wist he had but one.
Full many sheep I wot ye had,
And many women, when ye bade
To do your will and keep you glad;
And a good crown about your head
With gold to show thereon.
This Urias had one poor house
With low-barred latoun shot-windows
And scant of corn to fill a mouse;
And rusty basnets for his brows,
To wear them to the bone.
Yea the roofs also, as men sain,
Were thin to hold against the rain;
Therefore what rushes were there lain
Grew wet withouten foot of men;
The stancheons were all gone in twain
As sick man's flesh is gone.
Nathless he had great joy to see
The long hair of this Bersabe
Fall round her lap and round her
Even to her small soft feet, that be
Shod now with crimson royally
And covered with clean gold.
Likewise great joy he had to kiss
Her throat, where now the scarlet is
Against her little chin, I wis,
That then was but cold.
No scarlet then her kirtle had
And little gold about it sprad;
But her red mouth was always glad
To kiss, albeit the eyes were sad
With love they had to hold.

SECUNDUS MILES.

How! old thief, thy wits are lame;
To clip such it is no shame;
I rede you in the devil's name,
Ye come not here to make men game;
By Termagaunt that maketh grame,
I shall to-bete thine head.
Hic Diabolus capiat eum.
This knave hath sharp fingers, perfay;
Mahound you thank and keep alway,
And give you good knees to pray;
What man hath no lust to play,
The devil wring his ears, I say;
There is no more but wellaway,
For now am I dead.

KING DAVID.

Certes his mouth is wried and black,
Full little pence be in his sack;
This devil hath him by the back,
It is no boot to lie.

NATHAN.

Sitteth now still and learn of me
A little while and ye shall see
The face of God's strength presently.
All queens made as this Bersabe,
All that were fair and foul ye be,
Come hither; it am I.
Et hic omnes cantabunt.

HERODIAS.

I am the queen Herodias.
This headband of my temples was
King Herod's gold band woven me,
This broken dry staff in my hand
Was the queen's staff of a great land
Betwixen Perse and Samarie.
For that one dancing of my feet,
The fire is come in my green wheat
From one sea to the other sea.

AHOLIBAH.

I am the queen Aholibah.
My lips kissed dumb the word of *Ah*
Sighed on strange lips grown sick thereby
God wrought to me my royal bed:

The inner work thereof was red,
The outer work was ivory.
My mouth's heat was the heat of flame
For lust towards the kings that came
With horsemen riding royally.

CLEOPATRA.

I am the queen of Ethiope.
Love bade my kissing eyelids ope
That men beholding might praise love.
My hair was wonderful and curled;
My lips held fast the mouth of the world
To spoil the strength and speech thereof.
The latter triumph in my breath
Bowed down the beaten brows of death,
Ashamed they had not wrath enough.

ABIHAIL.

I am the queen of Tyrians.
My hair was glorious for twelve spans,
That dried to loose dust afterward.
My stature was a strong man's length:
My neck was like a place of strength
Built with white walls, even and hard.
Like the first noise of rain leaves catch
One from another, snatch by snatch,
Is my praise, hissed against and marred.

AZUBAH.

I am the queen of Amorites.
My face was like a place of lights
With multitudes at festival.
The glory of my gracious brows
Was like God's house made glorious
With colors upon either wall.
Between my brows and hair there was
A white space like a space of glass
With golden candles over all.

AHOLAH.

I am the queen of Amalek.
There was no tender touch or fleck
To spoil my body or bared feet.
My words were soft like dulcimers,
And the first sweet of grape-flowers
Made each side of my bosom sweet.
My raiment was as tender fruit
Whose rind smells sweet of spice-tree root,
Bruised balm-blossom and budded wheat.

AHINOAM.

I am the queen Ahinoam
Like the throat of a soft slain lamb
Was my throat, softer veined than his:
My lips were as two grapes the sun
Lays his whole weight of heat upon
Like a mouth heavy with a kiss:
My hair's pure purple a wrought fleece,
My temples therein as a piece
Of a pomegranate's cleaving is.

ATARAH.

I am the queen Sidonian.
My face made faint the face of man,
And strength was bound between my brows.
Spikenard was hidden in my ships,
Honey and wheat and myrrh in strips,
White wools that shine as color does
Soft linen dyed upon the fold,
Split spice and cores of scented gold
Cedar and broken calamus.

SEMIRAMIS.

I am the queen Semiramis.
The whole world and the sea that is
In fashion like a chrysopras,
The noise of all men laboring,
The priest's mouth tired through thanksgiving,
The sound of love in the blood's pause,
The strength of love in the blood's beat,
All these were cast beneath my feet
And all found lesser than I was.

HESIONE.

I am the queen Hesione.
The seasons that increased in me
Made my face fairer than all men's.
I had the summer in my hair;
And all the pale gold autumn air
Was as the habit of my sense.
My body was as fire that shone;
God's beauty that makes all things one
Was one among my handmaidens.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

I am the queen of Samothrace.
God, making roses, made my face
As a rose filled up full with red.
My prows made sharp the straitened seas
From Pontus to that Chersonese

Whereon the ebbed Asian stream is shed.
My hair was as sweet scent that drips;
Love's breath begun about my lips
Kindled the lips of people dead.

THOMYEIS.

I am the queen of Scythians.
My strength was like no strength of man's,
My face like day, my breast like spring.
My fame was felt in the extreme land
That hath sunshine on the one hand
And on the other star-shining.
Yea, and the wine there fails of breath;
Yea, and their life is waste like death;
Yea, and there death is a glad thing.

HARHAS.

I am the queen of Anakim.
In the spent years whose speech is dim,
Whose raiment is the dust and death,
My stately body without stain
Shone as the shining race of rain
Whose hair a great wind scattereth,
Now hath God turned my lips to sighs,
Plucked off mine eyelids from mine eyes,
And sealed with seals my way of breath.

MYRRHA.

I am the queen Arabian.
The tears wherewith mine eyelids ran
Smelt like my perfumed eyelids' smell.
A harsh thirst made my soft mouth hard,
That ached with kisses afterward;
My brain rang like a beaten bell.
As tears on eyes, as fire on wood,
Sin fed upon my breath and blood,
Sin made my breasts subside and swell.

PASIPHAE.

I am the queen Pasiphae.
Not all the pure clean-colored sea
Could cleanse or cool my yearning veins;
Nor any root nor herb that grew,
Flag-leaves that let green water through,
Nor washing of the dews and rains.
From shame's pressed core I wrung the sweet
Fruit's savour that was death to eat,
Whereof no seed but death remains.

SAPPHO.

I am the queen of Lesbians.
My love, that had no part in man's,
Was sweeter than all shape of sweet.
The intolerable infinite desire
Made my face pale like faded fire
When the ashen pyre falls through with heat.
My blood was hot wan wine of love,
And my song's sound the sound thereof,
The sound of the delight of it.

MESSALINA.

I am the queen of Italy.
These were the signs God set on me;
A barren beauty subtle and sleek,
Curled carven hair, and cheeks worn wan
With fierce false lips of many a man,
Large temples where the blood ran weak,
A mouth athirst and amorous
And hungering as the grave's mouth does
That, being an-hungered, cannot speak.

AMESTRIS.

I am the queen of Persians.
My breasts were lordlier than bright swans,
My body as amber fair and thin.
Strange flesh was given my lips for bread.
With poisonous hours my days were fed,
And my feet shod with adder-skin.
In Shushan toward Ecbatane
I wrought my joys with tears and pain,
My loves with blood and bitter sin.

EPHRATH.

I am the queen of Rephaim.
God, that some while refraineth him,
Made in the end a spoil of me.
My rumor was upon the world
As strong sound of swoln water hurled
Through porches of the straining sea.
My hair was like the flag-flower,
And my breasts carven goodlier
Than beryl with chalcedony.

PASITHEA.

I am the queen of Cypriotes.
Mine oarsmen, laboring with brown throats,
Sang of me many a tender thing.
My maidens, girdled loose and braced
With gold from bosom to white waist,

Praised me between their wool-combing.
All that praise Venus all night long
With lips like speech and lids like song
Praised me till song lost heart to sing.

ALACIEL.

I am the queen Alaciel.
My mouth was like that moist gold cell
Whereout the thickest honey drips
Mine eyes were as a grey-green sea;
The amorous blood that smote on me
Smote to my feet and finger-tips.
My throat was whiter than the dove.
Mine eyelids as the seals of love,
And as the doors of love my lips.

ERIGONE.

I am the queen Erigone
The wild wine shed as blood on me
Made my face brighter than a bride's.
My large lips had the old thirst of earth,
Mine arms the might of the old sea's girth
Bound round the whole world's iron sides,
Within mine eyes and in mine ears
Were music and the wine of tears,
And light, and thunder of the tides.
Et hic exeant, et dicat Bersabe regina.

Alas, God, for thy great pity
And for the might that is in thee,
Behold, I woful Bersabe
Cry out with stoopings of my knee
And thy wrath laid and bound on me
Till I may see thy love.
Behold, Lord, this child is grown
Within me between bone and bone
To make me mother of a son,
Made of my body with strong moan;
There shall not be another one
That shall be made hereof.

KING DAVID.

Lord God, alas, what shall I sain ?
Lo, thou art as an hundred men
Both to break and build again:
The wild ways thou makest plain,
Thine hands hold the hail and rain,
And thy fingers both grape and grain;
Of their largess we be all well fain,
And of their great pity;
The sun thou madest of good gold,
Of clean silver the moon cold,
All the great stars thou hast told
As thy cattle in thy fold
Every one by his name of old;
Wind and water thou hast in hold,
Both the land and the long sea;
Both the green sea and the land,
Lord God, thou hast in hand,
Both white water and grey sand;
Upon thy right or thy left hand
There is no man that may stand;
Lord, thou rue on me.
O wise Lord, if thou be keen
To note things amiss that been,
I am not worth a shell of bean
More than an old mare meagre and lean
For all my wrong-doing with my queen,
It grew not of our heartes clean,
But it began of her body.
For it fell in the hot May
I stood within a paven way
Built of fair bright stone, perfay,
That is as fire of night and day
And lighteth all my house.
Therein be neither stones nor sticks,
Neither red nor white bricks,
But for cubits five or six
There is most goodly sardonyx
And amber laid in rows.
It goes round about my roofs,
(If ye list ye shall have proofs)
There is good space for horse and hoofs,
Plain and nothing perilous.
For the fair green weather's heat,
And for the smell of leavès sweet,
It is no marvel, well ye weet,
A man to waxen amorous.
This I say now by my case
That spied forth of that royal place;
There I saw in no great space
Mine own sweet, both body and face,
Under the fresh boughs.
In a water that was there
She wesshe her goodly body bare
And dried it with her owen hair:
Both her arms and her knees fair,
Both bosom and brows;
Both shoulders and eke thighs
Tho she wesshe upon this wise;
Ever she sighed with little sighs,
And ever she gave God thank.
Yea, God wot I can well see yet
Both her breast and her sides all wet
And her long hair withouten let
Spread sideways like a drawing net;
Full dear bought and full far fet

Was that sweet thing there y-set:
It were a hard thing to forget
How both lips and eyen met,
Breast and breath sank.
So goodly a sight as there she was,
Lying looking on her glass
By wan water in green grass,
Yet saw never man.
So soft and great she was and bright
With all her body waxen white,
I woxe nigh blind to see the light
Shed out of it to left and right;
This bitter sin from that sweet sight
Between us twain began.

NATHAN.

Now, sir, be merry anon,
For ye shall have a full wise son,
Goodly and great of flesh and bone;
There shall no king be such an one
I swear by Godis rood.
Therefore, lord, be merry here,
And go to meat withouten fear,
And hear a mass with goodly cheer.
For to all folk ye shall be dear,
And all folk of your blood.

Et tunc dicant Laudamus.

ST. DOROTHY.

It hath been seen and yet it shall be seen
That out of tender mouths God's praise hath been
Made perfect, and with wood and simple string
He that played music sweet as shawm-playing
To please himself with softness of all sound;
And no small thing but hath been sometime found
Full sweet of use, and no such humbleness
But God hath bruised withal the sentences
And evidence of wise men witnessing;
No leaf that is so soft a hidden thing
It never shall get sight of the great sun;
The strength of ten has been the strength of one,
And lowliness has waxed imperious.
There was in Rome a man Theophilus
Of right great blood and gracious ways, that had
All noble fashions to make people glad
And a soft life of pleasurable days;
He was a goodly man for one to praise,
Flawless and whole upward from foot to head;
His arms were a red hawk that alway fed
On a small bird with feathers gnawed upon,
Beaten and plucked about the bosom-bone
Whereby a small round fleck like fire there was:
They called it in their tongue lampadias;
This was the banner of the lordly man.
In many straits of sea and reaches wan
Full of quick wind, and many a shaken firth,
It had seen fighting days of either earth,
Westward or east of waters Gaditane
(This was the place of sea-rocks under Spain
Called after the great praise of Hercules)
And north beyond the washing Pontic seas,
Far windy Russian places fabulous,
And salt fierce tides of storm-swoln Bosphorus.
Now as this lord came straying in Rome town
He saw a little lattice open down
And after it a press of maidens' heads
That sat upon their cold small quiet beds
Talking, and played upon short-stringed lutes;
And other some ground perfume out of roots
Gathered by marvellous moons in Asia
Saffron and aloes and wild cassia,
Colored all through and smelling of the sun:

And over all these was a certain one
Clothed softly, with sweet herbs about her hair
And bosom flowerful; her face more fair
Than sudden-singing April in soft lands;
Eyed like a gracious bird, and in both hands
She held a psalter painted green and red.
This Theophile laughed at the heart, and said;
Now God so help me hither and St. Paul,
As by the new time of their festival
I have good will to take this maid to wife.
And herewith fell to fancies of her life
And soft half-thoughts that ended suddenly.
This is man's guise to please himself, when he
Shall not see one thing of his pleasant things,
Nor with outwatch of many travailings
Come to be eased of the least pain he hath
For all his love and all his foolish wrath
And all the heavy manner of his mind.
Thus is he like a fisher fallen blind
That casts his nets across the boat awry
To strike the sea, but lo, he striketh dry
And plucks them back all broken for his pain
And bites his beard and casts across again
And reaching wrong slips over in the sea.
So hath this man a strangled neck for fee,
For all his cost he chuckles in his throat.
This Theophile that little hereof wote
Laid wait to hear of her what she might be:
Men told him she had name of Dorothy,
And was a lady of a worthy house.
Thereat this knight grew inly glorious
That he should have a love so fair of place.
She was a maiden of most quiet face,
Tender of speech and had no hardihood
But was nigh feeble of her fearful blood;
Her mercy in her was so marvellous
From her least years, that seeing her school-fellows
That read beside her stricken with a rod,
She would cry sore and say some word to God
That he would ease her fellow of his pain.
There is no touch of sun or fallen rain
That ever fell on a more gracious thing.
In middle Rome there was in stone-working
The church of Venus painted royally.
The chapels of it were some two or three,
In each of them her tabernacle was
And a wide window of six feet in glass
Colored with all her works in red and gold
The altars had bright cloths and cups to hold
The wine of Venus for the services,
Made out of honey and crushed wood berries
That shed sweet yellow through the thick wet red,
That on high days was borne upon the head
Of Venus' priest for any man to drink;
So that in drinking he should fall to think
On some fair face, and in the thought thereof
Worship, and such should triumph in his love.
For this soft wine that did such grace and good
Was new trans-shaped and mixed with love's own blood,
That in the fighting Trojan time was bled;
For which came such a woe to Diomed
That he was stifled after in hard sea.
And some said that this wine-shedding should be
Made of the falling of Adonis' blood,
That curled upon the thorns and broken wood
And round the gold silk shoes on Venus' feet;
The taste thereof was as hot honey sweet
And in the mouth ran soft and riotous.
This was the holiness of Venus' house.
It was their worship that in August days
Twelve maidens should go through their Roman ways
Naked, and having gold across their brows
And their hair twisted in short golden rows
To minister to Venus in this wise:
And twelve men chosen in their companies
To match these maidens by the altar-stair,
All in one habit, crowned upon the hair
Among these men was chosen Theophile.
This knight went out and prayed a little while,
Holding queen Venus by her hands and knees;
I will give thee twelve royal images
Cut in glad gold, with marvels of wrought stone
For thy sweet priest to lean and pray upon,
Jasper and hyacinth and chrysopras,
And the strange Asian thalamite that was
Hidden twelve ages under heavy sea
Among the little sleepy pearls, to be

A shrine lit over with soft candle-flame
Burning all night red as hot brows of shame,
So thou wilt be my lady without sin.
Goddess that art all gold outside and in,
Help me to serve thee in thy holy way.
Thou knowest, Love, that in my bearing day
There shone a laughter in the singing stars
Round the gold ceiléd bride-bed wherein Mars
Touched thee and had thee in your kissing wise.
Now, therefore, sweet kiss thou my maiden's eyes
That they may open graciously towards me;
And this new fashion of thy shrine shall be
As soft with gold as thine own happy head.
The goddess, that was painted with face red
Between two long green tumbled sides of sea,
Stooped her neck sideways, and spake pleasantly:
Thou shalt have grace as thou art thrall of mine.
And with this came a savor of shed wine
And plucked-out petals from a rose's head:
And softly with slow laughs of lip she said,
Thou shalt have favor all thy days of me.
Then came Theophilus to Dorothy,
Saying: O sweet, if one should strive or speak
Against God's ways, he gets a beaten cheek
For all his wage and shame above all men.
Therefore I have no will to turn again
When God saith "go," lest a worse thing fall out.
Then she, misdoubting lest he went about
To catch her wits, made answer somewhat thus:
I have no will, my lord Theophilus,
To speak against this worthy word of yours;
Knowing how God's will in all speech endures,
That save by grace there may no thing be said.
Then Theophile waxed light from foot to head,
And softly fell upon this answering.
It is well seen you are a chosen thing
To do God service in his gracious way.
I will that you make haste and holiday
To go next year upon the Venus stair,
Covered none else, but crowned upon your hair,
And do the service that a maiden doth.
She said: but I that am Christ's maid were loth
To do this thing that hath such bitter name.
Thereat his brows were beaten with sore shame
And he came off and said no other word.
Then his eyes chanced upon his banner-bird,
And he fell fingering at the staff of it
And laughed for wrath and stared between his feet.
And out of a chafed heart he spake as thus:
Lo how she japes at me Theophilus,
Feigning herself a fool and hard to love;
Yet in good time for all she boasteth of
She shall be like a little beaten bird.
And while his mouth was open in that word
He came upon the house Janiculum,
Where some went busily, and other some
Talked in the gate called the gate glorious.
The emperor, which was one Gabalus,
Sat over all and drank chill wine alone.
To whom is come Theophilus anon,
And said as thus: *Beau sire, Dieu vous aide.*
And afterward sat under him, and said
All this thing through as ye have wholly heard.
This Gabalus laughed thickly in his beard.
Yea, this is righteousness and maiden rule.
Truly, he said, a maid is but a fool.
And japed at them as one full villainous,
In a lewd wise, this heathen Gabalus,
And sent his men to bind her as he bade.
Thus have they taken Dorothy the maid,
And haled her forth as men hale pick-purses:
A little need God knows they had of this,
To hale her by her maiden gentle hair.
Thus went she lowly, making a soft prayer.
As one who stays the sweet wine in his mouth,
Murmuring with eased lips and is most loth
To have done wholly with the sweet of it.
Christ king, fair Christ, that knowest all men's wit
And all the feeble fashion of my ways,
O perfect God, that from all yesterdays
Abidest whole with morrows perfected,
I pray thee by thy mother's holy head
Thou help me to do right, that I not slip:
I have no speech nor strength upon my lip.
Except thou help me who art wise and sweet.

Do this too for those nails that clove thy feet,
Let me die maiden after many pains.
Though I be least among thy handmaidens,
Doubtless I shall take death more sweetly thus.
Now have they brought her to King Galalus,
Who laughed in all his throat some breathing-whiles.
By God, he said, if one should leap two miles,
He were not pained about the sides so much.
This were a soft thing for a man to touch.
Shall one so chafe that hath such little bones?
And shook his throat with thick and chuckled moans
For laughter that she had such holiness.
What aileth thee, wilt though do services
It were good fare to fare as Venus doth.
Then said this lady with her maiden mouth,
Shamefaced, and something paler in the cheek:
Now, sir, albeit my wit and will to speak
Give me no grace in sight of worthy men,
For all my shame yet know I this again,
I may not speak, nor after downlying
Rise up to take delight in lute-playing,
Nor sing nor sleep, nor sit and fold my hands,
But my soul in some measure understands
God's grace laid like a garment over me.
For this fair God that out of strong sharp sea
Lifted the shapely and green-colored land,
And hath the weight of heaven in his hand
As one might hold a bird, and under him
The heavy golden planets beam by beam
Building the feasting-chambers of his house,
And the large world he holdeth with his brows,
And with the light of them astonisheth
All place and time and face of life and death
And motion of the north wind and the south,
And is the sound within his angel's mouth
Of singing words and words of thanksgiving,
And is the color of the latter spring
And heat upon the summer and the sun,
And is beginning of all things begun
And gathers in him all things to their end,
And with the fingers of his hand doth bend
The stretched-out sides of heaven like a sail,
And with his breath he maketh the red pale
And fills with blood faint faces of men dead,
And with the sound between his lips are fed
Iron and fire and the white body of snow,
And blossom of all trees in places low,
And small bright herbs about the little hills,
And fruit pricked softly with birds' tender bills,
And flight of foam about green fields of sea,
And fourfold strength of the great winds that be
Moved always outward from beneath his feet,
And growth of grass and growth of sheaved wheat
And all green flower of goodly-growing lands;
And all these things he gathers with his hands
And covers all their beauty with his wings;
The same, even God that governs all these things,
Hath set my feet to be upon his ways.
Now therefore for no painfulness of days
I shall put off this service bound on me.
Also, fair sir, ye know this certainly,
How God was in his flesh full chaste and meek
And gave his face to shame, and either cheek
Gave up to smiting of men tyrannous.
And here with a great voice this Galalus
Cried out and said: By God's blood and his bones,
This were good game betwixen night and nones
For one to sit and hearken to such saws:
I were as lief fall in some big beast's jaws
As hear these women's jaw-teeth chattering;
By God a woman is the harder thing,
One may not put a hook into her mouth.
Now by St. Luke I am so sore adrouth
For all these saws I must needs drink again
But I pray God deliver all us men
From all such noise of women and their heat.
That is a noble scripture, well I weet,
That likens women to an empty can;
When God said that he was a full wise man.
I trow no man may blame him as for that.
And herewithal he drank a draught, and spat

And said: Now shall I make an end hereof.
Come near all men and hearken for God's love,
And ye shall hear a jest or twain, God wot.
And spake as thus with mouth full thick and hot;
But thou do this thou shalt be shortly slain.
Lo, sir, she said, this death and all this pain
I take in penance of my bitter sins.
Yea, now, quoth Gabalus, this game begins.
Lo, without sin one shall not live a span.
Lo, this is she that would not look on man
Between her fingers folded in thwart wise.
See how shame hath smitten in her eyes
That was so clean she had not heard of shame.
Certes, he said, by Gabalus my name,
This two years back I was not so well pleased.
This were good mirth for sick men to be eased
And rise up whole and laugh at hearing of.
I pray thee show us something of thy love,
Since thou wast maid thy gown is waxen wide.
Yea, maid I am, she said, and somewhat sighed,
As one who thought upon the low fair house
Where she sat working, with soft bended brows
Watching her threads, among the school-maidens.
And she thought well now God hath brought her thence
She should not come to sew her gold again.
Then cried King Gabalus upon his men
To have her forth and draw her with steel gins.
And as a man hag-ridden beats and grins
And bends his body sidelong in his bed,
So wagged he with his body and knave's head,
Gaping at her, and blowing with his breath.
And in good time he gat an evil death
Out of his lewdness with his cursed wives:
His bones were hewn asunder as with knives
For his misliving, certes it is said.
But all the evil wrought upon this maid,
It were full hard for one to handle it.
For her soft blood was shed upon her feet,
And all her body's color bruised and faint.
But she, as one abiding God's great saint,
Spake not nor wept for all this travail hard.
Wherefore the king commanded afterward
To slay her presently in all men's sight.
And it was now an hour upon the night
And winter-time, and a few stars began.
The weather was yet feeble and all wan
For beating of a weighty wind and snow.
And she came walking in soft wise and slow,
And many men with faces piteous.
Then came this heavy cursing Gabalus,
That swore full hard into his drunken beard;
And faintly after without any word
Came Theophile some paces off the king.
And in the middle of this wayfaring
Full tenderly beholding her he said:
There is no word of comfort with men dead
Nor any face and color of things sweet;
But always with lean cheeks and lifted feet
These dead men lie all aching to the blood
With bitter cold, their brows withouten hood
Beating for chill, their bodies swathed full thin:
Alas, what hire shall any have herein
To give his life and get such bitterness?
Also the soul going forth bodiless
Is hurt with naked cold, and no man saith
If there be house or covering for death
To hide the soul that is discomforted.
Then she beholding him a little said:
Alas, fair lord, ye have no wit of this;
For on one side death is full poor of bliss
And as ye say full sharp of bone and lean:
But on the other side is good and green
And hath soft flower of tender-colored hair
Grown on his head, and a red mouth as fair
As may be kissed with lips: thereto his face
Is as God's face, and in a perfect place
Full of all sun and color of straight boughs
And waterheads about a painted house
That hath a mile of flowers either way
Outward from it, and blossom-grass of May
Thickening on many a side for length of heat,
Hath God set death upon a noble seat
Covered with green and flowered in the fold,
In likeness of a great king grown full old
And gentle with new temperance of blood;
And on his brows a purfled purple hood,
They may not carry any golden thing;

And plays some tune with subtle fingering
On a small cithern, full of tears and sleep
And heavy pleasure that is quick to weep
And sorrow with the honey in her mouth;
And for this might of music that he doth
Are all souls drawn toward him with great love
And weep for sweetness of the noise thereof
And bow to him with worship of their knees;
And all the field is thick with companies
Of fair-clothed men that play on shawms and lutes
And gather honey of the yellow fruits
Between the branches waxen soft and wide;
And all this peace endures in either side
Of the green land, and God beholdeth all.
And this is girdled with a round fair wall
Made of red stone and cool with heavy leaves
Grown out against it, and green blossom cleaves
To the green chinks, and lesser wall-weed sweet,
Kissing the crannies that are split with heat,
And branches where the summer draws to head.
And Theophile burnt in the cheek, and said:
Yea, could one see it, this were marvellous.
I pray you, at your coming to this house,
Give me some leaf of all those tree-branches;
Seeing how so sharp and white our weather is,
There is no green nor gracious red to see.
Yea, sir, she said, that shall I certainly.
And from her long sweet throat without a fleck
Undid the gold, and through her stretched out neck
The cold axe clove, and smote away her head:
Out of her throat the tender blood full red
Fell suddenly through all her long soft hair.
And with good speed for hardness of the air
Each man departed to his house again.
Lo, as fair color in the face of men
At seed-time of their blood, or in such wise
As a thing seen increaseth in men's eyes,
Caught first far off by sickly fits of sight—
So a word said, if one shall hear aright,
Abides against the season of its growth.
This Theophile went slowly, as one doth
That is not sure for sickness of his feet;
And counting the white stonework of the street,
Tears fell out of his eyes for wrath and love,
Making him weep more for the shame thereof
Than for true pain: so went he half a mile.
And women mocked him, saying: Theophile,
Lo, she is dead; what shall a women have
That loveth such an one? so Christ me save,
I were as lief to love a man new-hung.
Surely this man has bitten on his tongue,
This makes him sad and writhled in his face
And when they came upon the paven place
That was called sometime the place amorous,
There came a child before Theophilus,
Bearing a basket, and said suddenly:
Fair sir, this is my mistress Dorothy
That sends you gifts; and with this he was gone.
In all this earth there is not such an one
For color and straight stature made so fair.
The tender growing gold of his pure hair
Was as wheat growing, and his mouth as flame.
God called him Holy after his own name;
With gold cloth like fire burning he was clad.
But for the fair green basket that he had,
It was filled up with heavy white and red:
Great roses stained still where the first rose bled,
Burning at heart for shame their heart withholds:
And the sad color of strong marigolds
That have the sun to kiss their lips for love;
The flower that Venus' hair is woven of,
The color of fair apples in the sun,
Late peaches gathered when the heat was done
And the slain air got breath; and after these
The fair faint-headed poppies drunk with ease,
And heaviness of hollow lilies red.
Then cried they all that saw these things, and said
It was God's doing, and was marvellous.
And in brief while this knight Theophilus
Is waxen full of faith, and witnesseth
Before the king of God and love and death,
For which the king bade hang him presently.

A gallows of a goodly piece of tree
This Gabalus hath made to hang him on.
Forth of this world lo Theophile is gone
With a wried neck, God give us better fare
Than his that hath a twisted throat to wear;
But truly for his love God hath him brought
There where his heavy body grieves him nought
Nor all the people plucking at his feet:
But in his face his lady's face is sweet,
And through his lips her kissing lips are gone:
God send him peace, and joy of such an one.
This is the story of St. Dorothy.
I will you of your mercy pray for me
Because I wrote these sayings for your grace,
That I may one day see her in the face.

THE TWO DREAMS.

(FROM BOCCACCIO.)

I WILL that if I say a heavy thing
Your tongues forgive me; seeing ye know that spring
Has flecks and fits of pain to keep her sweet,
And walks somewhile with winter-bitten feet.
Moreover it sounds often well to let
One string, when ye play music, keep at fret
The whole song through; one petal that is dead
Confirms the roses, be they white or red;
Dead sorrow is not sorrowful to hear
As the thick noise that breaks mid weeping were;
The sick sound aching in a lifted throat
Turns to sharp silver of a perfect note;
And though the rain falls often, and with rain
Late autumn falls on the old red leaves like pain,
I deem that God is not disquieted.
Also while men are fed with wine and bread,
They shall be fed with sorrow at his hand.
There grew a rose-garden in Florence land
More fair than many; all red summers through
The leaves smelt sweet and sharp of rain, and blew
Sideways with tender wind; and therein fell
Sweet sound wherewith the green waxed audible,
As a bird's will to sing disturbed his throat
And set the sharp wings forward like a boat
Pushed through soft water, moving his brown side
Smooth-shapen as a maid's, and shook with pride
His deep warm bosom, till the heavy sun's
Set face of heat stopped all the songs at once.
The ways were clean to walk and delicate;
And when the windy white of March grew late,
Before the trees took heart to face the sun
With ravelled raiment of lean winter on,
The roots were thick and hot with hollow grass.
Some roods away a lordly house there was,
Cool with broad courts and latticed passage wet
From rush-flowers and lilies ripe to set,

Sown close among the strewings of the floor;
And either wall of the slow corridor
Was dim with deep device of gracious things;
Some angel's steady mouth and weight of wings
Shut to the side; or Peter with straight stole
And beard cut black against the aureole
That spanned his head from nape to crown; there
Mary's gold hair, thick to the girdle-tie
Wherein was bound a child with tender feet;
Or the broad cross with blood nigh brown on it.

Within this house a righteous lord abode,
Ser Averardo; patient of his mood,
And just of judgment; and to child he had
A maid so sweet that her mere sight made glad
Men sorrowing, and unbound the brows of hate;
And where she came, the lips that pain made strait
Waxed warm and wide, and from untender grew
Tender as those that sleep brings patience to.
Such long locks had she, that with knee to chin
She might have wrapped and warmed her feet therein.
Right seldom fell her face on weeping wise;
Gold hair she had, and golden-colored eyes,
Filled with clear light and fire and large repose
Like a fair hound's; no man there is but knows
Her face was white, and thereto she was tall;
In no wise lacked there any praise at all
To her most perfect and pure maidenhood;
No sin I think there was in all her blood.

She, where a gold grate shut the roses in,
Dwelt daily through deep summer weeks, through green
Flushed hours of rain upon the leaves; and there
Love made him room and space to worship her
With tender worship of bowed knees, and wrought
Such pleasure as the pained sense palates not
For weariness, but at one taste undoes
The heart of its strong sweet, is ravenous
Of all the hidden honey, words and sense
Fail through the tune's imperious prevalence.

In a poor house this lover kept apart,
Long communing with patience next his heart
If love of his might move that face at all,
Tuned evenwise with colors musical;
Then after length of days he said thus:—
"Love,
For love's own sake and for the love thereof
Let no harsh words untune your gracious mood;
For good it were, if anything be good
To comfort me in this pain's plague of mine;
Seeing thus, how neither sleep nor bread nor wine
Seems pleasant to me; yea, no thing that is
Seems pleasant to me; only I know this,
Love's ways are sharp for palms of piteous feet
To travel, but the end of such is sweet:
Now do with me as seemeth you the best."
She mused a little, as one holds his guest
By the hand musing, with her face borne down:
Then said: "Yea, though such bitter seed be sown,
Have no more care of all that you have said;
Since if there is no sleep will bind your head,
Lo, I am fain to help you certainly;
Christ knoweth, sir, if I would have you die;
There is no pleasure when a man is dead."
Thereat he kissed her hands and yellow head
And clipped her fair long body many times;
I have no wit to shape in written rhymes
A scanted tithe of this great joy they had
They were too near love's secret to be glad
As whoso deems the core will surely melt
From the warm fruit his lips caress, hath felt
Some bitter kernel where the teeth shut hard:
Or as sweet music sharpens afterward,
Being half disrelished both for sharp and sweet;
As sea-water, having killed over-heat

In a man's body, chills it with faint ache;
So their sense, burdened only for love's sake,
Failed for pure love; yet so time served their wit,
They saved each day some gold reserves of it,
Being wiser in love's riddle than such be
Whom fragments feed with his chance charity.
All things felt sweet were felt sweet overmuch;
The rose-thorn's prickle dangerous to touch,
And flecks of fire in the thin leaf-shadows;
Too keen the breathèd honey of the rose,
Its red too harsh a weight on feasted eyes;
They were so far gone in love's histories,
Beyond all shape and color and mere breath
Where pleasure has for kinsfolk sleep and death,
And strength of soul and body waxen blind
For weariness, and flesh entoiled with mind,
When the keen edge of sense foretasteth sin.
Even this green place the summer caught then in
Seemed half deflowered and sick with beaten leaves
In their strayed eyes; these gold flower-fumed eyes
Burnt out to make the sun's love offering,
The midnoon's prayer, the rose's thanksgiving,
The tree's weight burdening the strengthless air,
The shape of her stilled eyes, her colored hair,
Her body's balance from the moving feet—
All this, found fair, lacked yet one grain of sweet
It had some warm weeks back: so perisheth
On May's new lip the tender April breath:
So those same walks the wind sowed lilies in
All April through, and all their latter kin
Of languid leaves whereon the Autumn blows—
The dead red raiment of the last year's rose—
The last year's laurel, and the last year's love,
Fade, and grow things that death grows weary of.

What man will gather in red summer-time
The fruit of some obscure and hoary rhyme
Heard last midwinter, taste the heart in it,
Mould the smooth semitones afresh, refit
The fair limbs ruined, flush the dead blood through
With color, make all broken beauties new
For love's new lesson—shall not such find pain
When the marred music laboring in his brain
Frets him with sweet sharp fragments, and lets slip
One word that might have satisfied his lip—
One touch that might put fire in all the chords?
This was her pain: to miss from all sweet words
Some taste of sound, diverse and delicate—
Some speech the old love found out to compensate
For seasons of shut lips and drowsiness—
Some grace, some word the old love found out to bless
Passionless months and undelighted weeks.
The flowers had lost their summer-scented cheeks
Their lips were no more sweet than daily breath:
The year was plagued with instances of death.
So fell it, these were sitting in cool grass
With leaves about, and many a bird there was
Where the green shadow thickliest impleached
Soft fruit and writhen spray and blossom bleached
Dry in the sun or washed with rains to white:
Her girdle was pure silk, the bosom bright
With purple as purple water and gold wrought in.
One branch had touched with dusk her lips and chin,
Made violet of the throat, abashed with shade
The breast's bright plaited work: but nothing frayed
The sun's large kiss on the luxurious hair.
Her beauty was new color to the air
And music to the silent many birds.
Love was an-hungered for some perfect words

To praise her with; but only her low name
"Andrevuola" came thrice, and thrice put shame
In her clear cheek, so fruitful with new red
That for pure love straightway shame's self was dead.
Then with lids gathered as who late had wept
She began saying: 'I have so little slept
My lids drowse now against the very sun;
Yea, the brain aching with a dream begun
Beats like a fitful blood; kiss but both brows,
And you shall pluck my thoughts grown dangerous
Almost away." He said thus, kissing them:
"O sole sweet thing that God is glad to name,
My one gold gift, if dreams be sharp and sore
Shall not the waking time increase much more
With taste and sound, sweet eyesight or sweet scent?
Has any heat too hard and insolent
Burnt bare the tender married leaves, undone
The maiden grass shut under from the sun?
Where in this world is room enough for pain?"
The feverish finger of love had touched again
Her lips with happier blood; the pain lay meek
In her fair face, nor altered lip nor cheek
With pallor or with pulse: but in her mouth
Love thirsted as a man wayfaring doth,
Making it humble as weak hunger is.
She lay close to him, bade do this and this,
Say that, sing thus: then almost weeping-ripe
Crouched, then laughed low. As one that fain would wipe
The old record out of old things done and dead,
She rose, she heaved her hands up, and waxed red
For wilful heart and blameless fear of blame;
Saying "Though my wits be weak, this is no shame
For a poor maid whom love so punisheth
With heats of hesitation and stopped breath
That with my dreams I live yet heavily
For pure sad heart and faith's humility.
Now be not wroth and I will shew you this.
"Methought our lips upon their second kiss
Met in this place, and a fair day we had
And fair soft leaves that waxed and were not sad
With shaken rain or bitten through with drouth;
When I, beholding ever how your mouth
Waited for mine, the throat being fallen back,
Saw crawl thereout a live thing flaked with black
Specks of brute slime and leper-colored scale,
A devil's hide with foul flame-writhen grail
Fashioned where hell's heat festers loathsomest;
And that brief speech may ease me of the rest,
Thus were you slain and eaten of the thing.
My waked eyes felt the new day shuddering
On their low lids, felt the whole east so beat,
Pant with close pulse of such a plague-struck heat,
As if the palpitating dawn drew breath
For horror, breathing between life and death,
Till the sun sprang blood-bright and violent."
So finishing, her soft strength wholly spent,
She gazed each way, lest some brute-hoovèd thing,
The timeless travail of hell's childbearing,
Should threat upon the sudden: whereat he,
For relish of her tasted misery
And tender little thornprick of her pain,
Laughed with mere love. What lover among men
But hath his sense fed sovereignly 'twixt whiles
With tears and covered eyelids and sick smiles
And soft disaster of a painèd face?
What pain, established in so sweet a place,
But the plucked leaf of it smells fragrantly?
What color burning man's wide-open eye
But may be pleasurably seen? what sense
Keeps in its hot sharp extreme violence
No savor of sweet things? The bereaved blood
And emptied flesh in their most broken mood

Fail not so wholly, famish not when thus
Past honey keeps the starved lip covetous.
Therefore this speech from a glad mouth began,
Breathed in her tender hair and temples wan
Like one prolonged kiss while the lips had breath:
"Sleep, that abides in vassalage of death
And in death's service wears out half his age,
Hath his dreams full of deadly vassalage,
Shadow and sound of things ungracious;
Fair shallow faces, hooded bloodless brows,
And mouths past kissing; yea, myself have had
As harsh a dream as holds your eyelids sad.
"This dream I tell you came three nights ago;
In full mid sleep I took a whim to know
How sweet things might be; so I turned and thought;
But save my dream all sweet availed me not.
First came a smell of pounded spice and scent
Such as God ripens in some continent
Of utmost amber in the Syrian sea:
And breaths as though some costly rose could be
Spoiled slowly, wasted by some bitter fire
To burn the sweet out leaf by leaf, and tire
The flower's poor heart with heat and waste, to make
Strong magic for some perfumed woman's sake.
Then a cool naked sense beneath my feet
Of bud and blossom; and sound of veins that beat
As if a lute should play of its own heart
And fearfully, not smitten of either part;
And all my blood it filled with sharp and sweet
As gold swoln grain fills out the husked wheat;
So I rose naked from the bed, and stood
Counting the mobile measure in my blood
Some pleasant while, and through each limb there came
Swift little pleasures pungent as a flame
Felt in the thrilling flesh and veins as much
As the outer curls that feel the comb's first touch
Thrill to the roots and shiver as from fire;
And blind between my dream and my desire
I seemed to stand and held my spirit still
Lest this should cease. A child whose fingers spill
Honey from cells forgotten of the bee
Is less afraid to stir the hive and see
Some wasp's bright back inside, than I to feel
Some finger-touch disturb the flesh like steel.
I prayed thus; Let me catch a secret here
So sweet, it sharpens the sweet taste of fear
And takes the mouth with edge of wine; I would
Have here some color and smooth shape as good
As those in heaven whom the chief garden hides
With low grape-blossom veiling their white sides
And lesser tendrils that so bind and blind
Their eyes and feet, that if one come behind
To touch their hair they see not, neither fly;
This would I see in heaven and not die.
So praying; I had nigh cried out and knelt,
So wholly my prayer filled me: till I felt
In the dumb night's warm weight of glowing gloom
Somewhat that altered all my sleeping-room,
And made it like a green low place wherein
Maids mix to bathe: one sets her small warm chin
Against a ripple that the angry pearl
May flow like flame about her: the next curl
Dips in some eddy colored of the sun
To wash the dust well out; another one
Holds a straight ankle in her hand and swings
With lavish body sidelong, so that rings
Of fierce sweet water, swollen and splendid, fail
All round her fine and floated body pale,
Swayed flower fashion, and her balanced side
Swerved edgeways lets the weight of water slide,
As taken in some underflow of sea
Swerves the banked gold of sea-flowers; but she

Pulls down some branch to keep her perfect head
Clear of the river: even from wall to bed,
I tell you, was my room transfigured so.
Sweet, green and warm it was, nor could one know
If there were walls or leaves, or if there was
No bed's green curtain, but mere gentle grass.
There were set also hard against the feet
Gold plates with honey and green grapes to eat,
With the cool water's noise to hear in rhymes:
And a wind warmed me full of furze and limes
And all hot sweets the heavy summer fills
To the round brim of smooth cup-shapen hills.
Next the grave walking of a woman's feet
Made my veins hesitate, and gracious heat
Made thick the lids and leaden on mine eyes:
And I thought ever, surely it were wise
Not yet to see her: this may last (who knows ?)
Five minutes; the poor rose is twice a rose
Because it turns a face to her, the wind
Sings that way; hath this woman ever sinned,
I wonder ? as a boy with apple-rind,
I played with pleasures, made them to my mind,
Changed each ere tasting. When she came indeed,
First her hair touched me, then I grew to feed
On the sense of her hand: her mouth at last
Touched me between the cheek and lip and past
Over my face with kisses here and there
Sown in and out across the eyes and hair.
Still I said nothing; till she set her face
More close and harder on the kissing-place,
And her mouth caught like a snake's mouth, and stung
So faint and tenderly, the fang scarce clung
More than a bird's foot: yet a wound it grew,
A great one, let this red mark witness you
Under the left breast; and the stroke thereof
So clove my sense that I woke out of love
And knew not what this dream was nor had wit;
But now God knows if I have skill of it."
Hereat she laid one palm against her lips
To stop their trembling; as when water slips
Out of a beak-mouthed vessel with faint noise
And chuckles in the narrow throat and cloys
The carven rims with murmuring, so came
Words in her lips with no word right of them,
A beaten speech thick and disconsolate,
Till his smile ceasing waxed compassionate
Of her sore fear that grew from anything—
The sound of the strong summer thickening
In heated leaves of the smooth apple-trees:
The day's breath felt about the ash-branches
And noises of the noon whose weight still grew
On the hot heavy-headed flowers, and drew
Their red mouths open till the rose-heart ached;
For eastward all the crowding rose was slaked
And soothed with shade: but westward all its growth
Seemed to breathe hard with heat as a man doth
Who feels his temples newly feverous.
And even with such motion in her brows
As that man hath in whom sick days begin,
She turned her throat and spake, her voice being thin
As a sick man's, sudden and tremulous;
"Sweet, if this end be come indeed on us,
Let us love more;" and held his mouth with hers.
As the first sound of flooded hill-waters
Is heard by people of the meadow-grass,
Or ever a wandering waif of ruin pass
With whirling stones and foam of the brown stream
Flaked with fierce yellow: so beholding him
She felt before tears came her eyelids wet,
Saw the face deadly thin where life was yet,
Heard his throat's harsh last moan before it clomb:
And he, with close mouth passionate and dumb

Burned at her lips: so lay they without speech,
Each grasping other, and the eyes of each
Fed in the other's face: till suddenly
He cried out with a little broken cry
This word "O help me, sweet, I am but dead."
And even so saying, the color of fair red
Was gone out of his face, and his blood's beat
Fell, and stark death made sharp his upward feet
And pointed hands: and without moan he died.
Pain smote her sudden in the brows and side,
Strained her lips open and made burn her eyes:
For the pure sharpness of her miseries
She had no heart's pain, but mere body's wrack;
But at the last her beaten blood drew back
Slowly upon her face, and her stunned brows
Suddenly grown aware and piteous
Gathered themselves, her eyes shone, her hard breath
Came as though one nigh dead came back from death;
Her lips throbbed, and life trembled through her hair.
And in brief while she thought to bury there
The dead man that her love might lie with him
In a sweet bed under the rose-roots dim
And soft earth round the branched apple-trees,
Full of hushed heat and heavy with great ease,
And no man entering divide him thence.
Wherefore she bade one of her handmaidens
To be her help to do upon this wise.
And saying so the tears out of her eyes
Fell without noise and comforted her heart:
Yea, her great pain eased of the sorest part
Began to soften in her sense of it.
There under all the little branches sweet
The place was shapen of his burial;
They shed thereon no thing funereal,
But colored leaves of latter rose-blossom,
Stems of soft grass, some withered red and some
Fair and flesh-blooded; and spoil splendider
Of marigold and great spent sunflower.
And afterward she came back without word
To her own house; two days went, and the third
Went, and she showed her father of this thing.
And for great grief of her soul's travailing
He gave consent she should endure in peace
Till her life's end; yea, till her time should cease,
She should abide in fellowship of pain.
And having lived a holy year or twain
She died of pure waste heart and weariness.
And for love's honor in her love's distress
This word was written over her tomb's head;
"Here dead she lieth, for whose sake Love is dead."

AHOLIBAH.

In the beginning God made thee
A woman well to look upon,
Thy tender body as a tree
Whereon cool wind hath always blown
Till the clean branches be well grown.
There was none like thee in the land;
The girls that were thy bondwomen
Did bind thee with a purple band;
Upon thy forehead, that all men,
Should know thee for God's handmaiden.

Strange raiment clad thee like a bride,
With silk to wear on hands and feet
And plates of gold on either side:
Wine made thee glad, and thou didst eat
Honey, and choice of pleasant meat.

And fishers in the middle sea
Did get thee sea-fish and sea-weeds
In color like the robes on thee;
And curious work of plaited reeds,
And wools wherein live purple bleeds.

And round the edges of thy cup
Men wrought thee marvels out of gold,
Strong snakes with lean throats lifted up,
Large eyes whereon the brows had hold,
And scaly things their slime kept cold.

For thee they blew soft wind in flutes
And ground sweet roots for cunning scent;
Made slow because of many lutes,
The wind among thy chambers went
Wherein no light was violent.

God called thy name Aholibah,
His tabernacle being in thee,
A witness through waste Asia;
Thou wert a tent sewn cunningly
With gold and colors of the sea.

God gave thee gracious ministers
And all their work who plait and weave:
The cunning of embroiderers
That sew the pillow to the sleeve,
And likeness of all things that live.

Thy garments upon thee were fair
With scarlet and with yellow thread;
Also the weaving of thine hair
Was as fine gold upon thy head,
And thy silk shoes were sewn with red.

All sweet things he bade sift, and ground
As a man grindeth wheat in mills
With strong wheels alway going round;
He gave thee corn, and grass that fills
The cattle on a thousand hills.

The wine of many seasons fed
Thy mouth, and made it fair and clean;
Sweet oil was poured out on thy head
And ran down like cool rain between
The strait close locks it melted in.

The strong men and the captains knew
Thy chambers wrought and fashioned
With gold and covering of blue,
And the blue raiment of thine head
Who satest on a stately bed.

All these had on their garments wrought
The shape of beasts and creeping things,
The body that availeth not,
Flat backs of worms and veinèd wings,
And the lewd bulk that sleeps and stings.

Also the chosen of the years,
The multitude being at ease,
With sackbuts and with dulcimers
And noise of shawms and psalteries
Made mirth within the ears of these.

But as a common woman doth,
Thou didst think evil and devise;
The sweet smell of thy breast and mouth
Thou madest as the harlot's wise,
And there was painting on thine eyes.

Yea, in the woven guest-chamber
And by the painted passages
Where the strange gracious paintings were,
State upon state of companies,
There came on thee the lust of these.

Because of shapes on either wall
Sea-colored from some rare blue shell
At many a Tyrian interval,
Horsemen on horses, girdled well,
Delicate and desirable,

Thou saidest: I am sick of love:
Stay me with flagons, comfort me
With apples for my pain thereof
Till my hands gather in his tree
That fruit wherein my lips would be.

Yea, saidest thou, I will go up
When there is no more shade than one
May cover with a hollow cup,
And make my bed against the sun
Till my blood's violence be done.

Thy mouth was leant upon the wall
Against the painted mouth, thy chin
Touched the hair's painted curve and fall:
Thy deep throat, fallen lax and thin,
Worked as the blood's beat worked therein.

Therefore, O thou Aholibah,
God is not glad because of thee;
And thy fine gold shall pass away
Like those fair coins of ore that be
Washed over by the middle sea.

Then will one make thy body bare
To strip it of all gracious things,
And pluck the cover from thine hair,
And break the gift of many kings,
Thy wrist-rings and thine ankle-rings.

Likewise the man whose body joins
To thy smooth body, as was said,
Who hath a girdle on his loins
And dyed attire upon his head—
The same who, seeing, worshipped,

Because thy face was like the face
Of a clean maiden that smells sweet,
Because thy gait was as the pace
Of one that opens not her feet
And is not heard within the street—

Even he, O thou Aholibah,
Made separate from thy desire,
Shall cut thy nose and ears away
And bruise thee for thy body's hire
And burn the residue with fire.

Then shall the heathen people say
The multitude being at ease,
Lo, this is that Aholibah
Whose name was blown among strange seas,
Grown old with soft adulteries.

Also her bed was made of green,
Her windows beautiful for glass
That she had made her bed between:
Yea, for pure lust her body was
Made like white summer-colored grass.

Her raiment was a strong man's spoil;
Upon a table by a bed
She set mine incense and mine oil
To be the beauty of her head
In chambers walled about with red.

Also between the walls she had
Fair faces of strong men portrayed;
All girded round the loins, and clad
With several cloths of woven braid
And garments marvellously made.

Therefore the wrath of God shall be
Set as a watch upon her way;
And whoso findeth by the sea
Blown dust of bones will hardly say
If his were that Aholibah.

LOVE AND SLEEP.

LYING asleep between the strokes of night
I saw my love lean over my sad bed,
Pale as the duskiest lily's leaf or head,
Smooth-skinned and dark, with bare throat made to bite,
Too wan for blushing and too warm for white,
But perfect-colored without white or red.
And her lips opened amorously, and said—
I wist not what, saving one word—Delight.

And all her face was honey to my mouth,
And all her body pasture to mine eyes;
The long lithe arms and hotter hands than fire,
The quivering flanks, hair smelling of the south,
The bright light feet, the splendid supple thighs
And glittering eyelids of my soul's desire.

MADONNA MIA.

UNDER green apple boughs
That never a storm will rouse,
My lady hath her house
  Between two bowers;
In either of the twain
Red roses full of rain;
She hath for bondwomen
  All kind of flowers.

She hath no handmaid fair
To draw her curled gold hair
Through rings of gold that bear
  Her whole hair's weight;
She hath no maids to stand
Gold-clothed on either hand;
In all the great green land
  None is so great.

She hath no more to wear
But one white hood of vair
Drawn over eyes and hair,
  Wrought with strange gold,
Made for some great queen's head,
Some fair great queen since dead;
And one strait gown of red
  Against the cold.

Beneath her eyelids deep
Love lying seems asleep,
Love, swift to wake, to weep,
  To laugh to gaze;
Her breasts are like white birds,
And all her gracious words
As water-grass to herds
  In the June-days.

To her all dews that fall
And rains are musical;
Her flowers are fed from all,
  Her joys from these;
In the deep-feathered firs
Their gift of joy is hers,
In the least breath that stirs
  Across the trees.

She grows with greenest leaves,
Ripens with reddest sheaves,
Forgets, remembers, grieves,
  And is not sad;
The quiet lands and skies
Leave light upon her eyes;
None knows her, weak or wise,
  Or tired or glad.

None knows, none understands,
What flowers are like her hands;
Though you should search all lands
  Wherein time grows,
What snows are like her feet,
Though his eyes burn with heat
Through gazing on my sweet,
  Yet no man knows

Only this thing is said;
That white and gold and red,
God's three chief words, man's bread
  And oil and wine,
Were given her for dowers,
And kingdom of all hours,
And grace of goodly flowers
  And various vine.

This is my lady's praise:
God after many days
Wrought her in unknown ways,
  In sunset lands;
This was my lady's birth;
God gave her might and mirth
And laid his whole sweet earth
  Between her hands.

Under deep apple-boughs
My lady hath her house;
She wears upon her brows
  The flower thereof;
All saying but what God saith
To her is as vain breath;
She is more strong than death,
  Being strong as love.

THE KING'S DAUGHTER.

We were ten maidens in the green corn,
Small red leaves in the mill-water:
Fairer maidens never were born,
Apples of gold for the king's daughter.

We were ten maidens by a well-head,
Small white birds in the mill-water:
Sweeter maidens never were wed,
Rings of red for the king's daughter.

The first to spin, the second to sing,
Seeds of wheat in the mill-water;
The third may was a goodly thing,
White bread and brown for the king's daughter.

The fourth to sew and the fifth to play,
Fair green weed in the mill-water;
The sixth may was a goodly may,
White wine and red for the king's daughter.

The seventh to woo, the eighth to wed,
Fair thin reeds in the mill-water;
The ninth had gold work on her head,
Honey in the comb for the king's daughter.

The ninth had gold work round her hair,
Fallen flowers in the mill-water;
The tenth may was goodly and fair,
Golden gloves for the king's daughter.

We were ten maidens in a field green,
Fallen fruit in the mill-water;
Fairer maidens never have been,
Golden sleeves for the king's daughter.

By there comes the king's young son,
A little wind in the mill-water;
"Out of ten maidens ye'll grant me one,'
A crown of red for the king's daughter.

"Out of ten mays ye'll give me the best,"
A little rain in the mill-water;
A bed of yellow straw for all the rest,
A bed of gold for the king's daughter.

He's ta'en out the goodliest,
Rain that rains in the mill-water;
A comb of yellow shell for all the rest,
A comb of gold for the king's daughter.

He's made her bed to the goodliest,
Wind and hail in the mill-water;
A grass girdle for all the rest,
A girdle of arms for the king's daughter.

He's set his heart to the goodliest,
Snow that snows in the mill-water;
Nine little kisses for all the rest,
An hundredfold for the king's daughter.

He's ta'en his leave at the goodliest,
Broken boats in the mill-water;
Golden gifts for all the rest,
Sorrow of heart for the king's daughter.

"Ye'll make a grave for my fair body,"
Running rain in the mill-water;
"And ye'll streek my brother at the side of me,"
The pains of hell for the king's daughter.

AFTER DEATH.

The four boards of the coffin lid
Heard all the dead men did.

The first curse was in his mouth,
Made of grave's mould and deadly drouth.

The next curse was in his head,
Made of God's work discomfited.

The next curse was in his hands,
Made out of two grave-bands.

The next curse was in his feet,
Made out of a grave-sheet.

"I had fair coins red and white,
And my name was as great light;

I had fair clothes green and red,
And strong gold bound round my head.

But no meat comes in my mouth,
Now I fare as the worm doth;

And no gold binds in my hair,
Now I fare as the blind fare.

My live thews were of great strength,
Now I am waxen a span's length;

My live sides were full of lust,
Now are they dried with dust."

The first board spake and said:
"Is it best eating flesh or bread?"

The second answered it:
"Is wine or honey the more sweet?"

The third board spake and said:
"Is red gold worth a girl's gold head?"

The fourth made answer thus:
"All these things are as one with us."

The dead man asked of them:
"Is the green land stained brown with flame?

Have they hewn my son for beasts to eat,
And my wife's body for beasts' meat?

Have they boiled my maid in a brass pan
And built a gallows to hang my man?"

The boards said to him:
"This is a lewd thing that ye deem.

Your wife has gotten a golden bed,
All the sheets are sewn with red.

Your son has gotten a coat of silk,
The sleeves are soft as curded milk.

Your maid has gotten a kirtle new,
All the skirt has braids of blue.

Your man has gotten both ring and glove,
Wrought well for eyes to love."

The dead man answered thus:
"What good gift shall God give us?"

The boards answered him anon:
"Flesh to feed hell's worm upon."

MAY JANET.

(BRETON.)

"STAND up, stand up, thou May Janet,
And go to the wars with me."
He's drawn her by both hands
With her face against the sea.

"He that strews red shall gather white,
He that sows white reap red.
Before your face and my daughter's
Meet in a marriage bed.

"Gold coin shall grow in the yellow field,
Green corn in the green sea-water,
And red fruit grow of the rose's red,
Ere your fruit grow in her."

"But I shall have her by land," he said,
"Or I shall have her by sea,
Or I shall have her by strong treason
And no grace go with me."

Her father's drawn her by both hands,
He's rent her gown from her,
He's ta'en the smock round her body,
Cast in the sea-water.

The captain's drawn her by both sides
Out of the fair green sea;
"Stand up, stand up, thou May Janet,
And come to the war with me."

The first town they came to
There was a blue bride-chamber:
He clothed her on with silk
And belted her with amber.

The second town they came to
The bridesmen feasted knee to knee,
He clothed her on with silver,
A stately thing to see.

The third town they came to
The bridesmaids all had gowns of gold;
He clothed her on with purple,
A rich thing to behold.

The last town they came to
He clothed her white and red,
With a green flag either side of her
And a gold flag overhead

THE BLOODY SON

(FINNISH.)

"O WHERE have ye been the morn sae late,
My merry son, come tell me hither?
O where have ye been the morn sae late?
And I wot I hae but anither."
"By the water-gate, by the water-gate
O dear mither."

"And whattin kin' o' wark had ye there to make,
My merry son, come tell me hither?
And whatten kin' o' wark had ye there to make?
And I wot I hae but anither."
"I watered my steeds with water frae the lake,
O dear mither."

"Why is your coat sae fouled the day
My merry son, come tell me hither?
Why is your coat sae fouled the day?
And I wot I hae but anither."
"The steeds wer stamping sair by the weary banks of clay,
O dear mither."

"And where gat ye thae sleeves of red,
My merry son, come tell me hither?
And where gat ye thae sleeves of red?
And I wot I hae but anither."
"I have slain my ae brither by the weary water-head,
O dear mither."

"And where will ye gang to mak your mend?
My merry son, come tell me hither?
And where will ye gang to mak your mend?
And I wot I hae not anither."
"The warldis way, to the warldis end,
O dear mither."

And what will ye leave your father dear,
My merry son, come tell me hither?
And what will ye leave your father dear?
And I wot I hae not anither"
"The wood to fell and the logs to bear,
For he'll never see my body mair,
O dear mither."

"And what will ye leave your mither dear,
My merry son, come tell me hither?
And what will ye leave your mither dear?
And I wot I hae not anither"
"The wool to card and the wool to wear,
For ye'll never see my body mair,
O dear mither."

"And what will ye leave for your wife to take,
My merry son, come tell me hither?
And what will ye leave for your wife to take?
And I wot I hae not anither."
"A goodly gown and a fair new make,
For she'll do nae mair for my body's sake,
O dear mither."

"And what will ye leave your young son fair,
My merry son, come tell me hither?
And what will ye leave your young son fair?
And I wot ye hae not anither."
"A twiggen school-rod for his body to bear,
Though it garred him greet he'll get nae mair,
O dear mither."

"And what will ye leave your little daughter sweet?
My merry son, come tell me hither?
And what will ye leave your little daughter sweet?
And I wot ye hae not anither."
"Wild mulberries for her mouth to eat,
She'll get nae mair though it garred her greet,
O dear mither."

"And when will ye come back frae roamin',
My merry son come tell me hither?
And when will ye come back frae roamin'?
And I wot I hae not anither."
"When the sunrise out of the north is comen,
O dear mither."

"When shall the sunrise on the north side be,
My merry son, come tell me hither?
When shall the sunrise on the north side be?
And I wot I hae not anither."
"When chuckie-stanes shall swim in the sea,
O dear mither,"

"When shall stanes in the sea swim,
My merry son, come tell me hither?
When shall stanes in the sea swim?
And I wot I hae not anither."
"When birdies' feathers are as lead therein,
O dear mither."

"When shall feathers be as lead,
My merry son, come tell me hither?
When shall feathers be as lead?
And I wot I hae not anither."
"When God shall judge between the quick and dead,
O dear mither."

THE SEA-SWALLOWS.

THIS fell when Christmas lights were done,
Red rose leaves will never make wine;
But before the Easter lights begun;
The ways are sair fra' the Till to the Tyne.

Two lovers sat where the rowan blows
And all the grass is heavy and fine,
By the gathering place of the sea-swallows
When the wind brings them over Tyne.

Blossom of broom will never make bread,
Red rose leaves will never make wine:
Between her brows she is grown red,
That was full white in the fields by Tyne.

"O what is this thing ye have on,
Show me now, sweet daughter of mine?"
"O father, this is my little son
That I found hid in the sides of Tyne."

"O what will ye give my son to eat,
Red rose leaves will never make wine?"
"Fen-water and adder's meat,
The ways are sair fra' the Till to the Tyne."

"Or what will ye get my son to wear,
Red rose leaves will never make wine?"
"A weed and a web of nettle's hair,
The ways are sair fra' the Till to the Tyne."

"Or what will ye take to line his bed,
Red rose leaves will never make wine?"
"Two black stones at the kirkwall's head,
The ways are sair fra the Till to the Tyne."

"Or what will ye give my son for land,
Red rose leaves will never make wine?"
"Three girl's paces of red sand,
The ways are sair fra' the Till to the Tyne.

"Or what will ye give me for my son,
Red rose leaves will never make wine?"
"Six times to kiss his young mouth on,
The ways are sair fra' the Till to the Tyne."

"But what have ye done with the bearing bread,
And what have ye made with the washing-wine?
Or where have ye made your bearing-bed,
To bear a son in the sides of Tyne?"

"The bearing-bred is soft and new,
There is no soil in the straining wine;
The bed was made between green and blue,
It stands full soft by the sides of Tyne.

"The fair grass was my bearing-bread,
The well-water my washing-wine;
The low leaves were my bearing-bed,
And that was best in the sides of Tyne."

"O daughter, if ye have done this thing,
I wot the greater grief is mine;
This was a bitter child-bearing,
When ye were got by the sides of Tyne."

"About the time of sea-swallows
That fly full thick by six and nine,
Ye'll have my body out of the house,
To bury me by the sides of Tyne.

"Set nine stones by the wall for twain,
Red rose leaves will never make wine;
For the bed I take will measure ten,
The ways are sair fra' the Till to the Tyne.

"Tread twelve girl's paces out for three,
Red rose leaves will never make wine;
For the pit I made has taken me,
The ways are sair fra' the Till to the Tyne."

THE YEAR OF LOVE.

THERE were four loves that one by one,
Following the seasons and the sun,
Passed over without tears, and fell
Away without farewell.

The first was made of gold and tears,
The next of aspen-leaves and fears,
The third of rose-boughs and rose-roots,
The last love of strange fruits.

These were the four loves faded. Hold
Some minutes fast the time of gold
When our lips each way clung and clove
To a face full of love.

The tears inside our eyelids met,
Wrung forth with kissing, and wept wet
The faces cleaving each to each
Where the blood served for speech.

The second, with low patient brows
Bound under aspen-colored boughs
And eyes made strong and grave with sleep
And yet too weak to weep—

The third, with eager mouth at ease
Fed from late autumn honey, lees
Of scarce gold left in latter cells
With scattered flower-smells—

Hair sprinkled over with spoilt sweet
Of ruined roses, wrists and feet
Slight-swathed, as grassy girdled sheaves
Hold in stray poppy-leaves—

The fourth, with lips whereon has bled
Some great pale fruit's slow color, shed
From the rank bitter husk whence drips
Faint blood between her lips—

Made of the heat of whole great Junes
Burning the blue dark round their moons
(Each like a mown red marigold)
So hard the flame keeps hold—

These are burnt thoroughly away.
Only the first holds out a day
Beyond these latter loves that were
Made of mere heat and air.

And now the time is winterly
The first loves fades too: none will see,
When April warms the world anew,
The place wherein love grew.

DEDICATION.

1865.

THE sea gives her shells to the shingle,
The earth gives her streams to the sea;
They are many, but my gift is single,
My verses, the first fruits of me.
Let the wind take the green and the grey leaf,
Cast forth without fruit upon air;
Take rose-leaf and vine-leaf and bay-leaf
Blown loose from the hair.

The night shakes them round me in legions
Dawn drives them before her like dreams;
Time sheds them like snows on strange regions,
Swept shoreward on infinite streams;
Leaves pallid and sombre and ruddy,
Dead fruits of the fugitive years;
Some stained as with wine and made bloody,
And some as with tears.

Some scattered in seven years' traces,
As they fell from the boy that was then;
Long left among idle green places,
Or gathered but now among men;
On seas full of wonder and peril,
Blown white round the capes of the north;
Or in islands where myrtles are sterile
And loves bring not forth.

O daughters of dreams and of stories
That life is not wearied of yet,
Faustine, Fragoletta, Dolores,
Félise and Yolande and Juliette,
Shall I find you not still, shall I miss you,
When sleep, that is true or that seems,
Comes back to me hopeless to kiss you,
O daughters of dreams.

They are past as a slumber that passes,
As the dew of a dawn of old time:
More frail than the shadows on glasses,
More fleet than a wave or a rhyme.
As the waves after ebb drawing seaward,
When their hollows are full of the night,
So the birds that flew singing to me-ward
Recede out of sight.

The songs of dead seasons, that wander
On wings of articulate words;
Lost leaves that the shore-wind may squander,
Light flocks of untameable birds;
Some sang to me dreaming in class time
And truant in hand as in tongue;
For the youngest were born of boy's pastime,
The eldest are young.

Is there shelter while life in them lingers,
Is there hearing for songs that recede,
Tunes touched from a harp with men's fingers
Or blown with boy's mouth in a reed?
Is there place in the land of your labor,
Is there room in your world of delight,
Where change has not sorrow for neighbor
And day has not night?

In their wings though the sea-wind yet quivers,
Will you spare not a space for them there
Made green with the running of rivers
And gracious with temperate air;
In the fields and the turreted cities,
That cover from sunshine and rain
Fair passions and bountiful pities
And loves without stain?

In a land of clear colors and stories,
In a region of shadowless hours,
Where earth has a garment of glories
And a murmur of musical flowers;
In woods where the spring half uncovers
The flush of her amorous face,
By the waters that listen for lovers,
For these is there place?

For the song-birds of sorrow, that muffle
Their music as clouds do their fire:
For the storm-birds of passion, that ruffle
Wild wings in a wind of desire;
In the stream of the storm as it settles
Blown seaward, borne far from the sun,
Shaken loose on the darkness like petals
Dropt one after one?

Though the world of your hands be more gracious
And lovelier in lordship of things
Clothed round by sweet art with the spacious
Warm heaven of her imminent wings,
Let them enter, unfledged and nigh fainting,
For the love of old loves and lost times;
And receive in your palace of painting
This revel of rhymes.

Though the seasons of man full of losses
Make empty the years full of youth,
If but one thing be constant in crosses,
Change lays not her hand upon truth;
Hopes die, and their tombs are for token
That the grief as the joy of them ends
Ere time that breaks all men has broken
The faith between friends.

Though the many lights dwindle to one light,
There is help if the heaven has one;
Though the skies be discrowned of the sunlight
And the earth dispossessed of the sun,
They have moonlight and sleep for repayment,
When, refreshed as a bride and set free
With stars and sea-winds in her raiment,
Night sinks on the sea.

SONGS OF TWO NATIONS.

I. A SONG OF ITALY.

II. ODE ON THE PROCLAMATION OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC.

III. DIRÆ.

I saw the double-featured statue stand
Of Memnon or of Janus, half with night
, eiled, and fast bound with iron; half with light
Crowned, holding all men's future in his hand.

And all the old westward face of time grown grey
Was writ with cursing and inscribed for death
But on the fac. that met the morning's breath
Fear died of hope as darkness dies of day.

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INSCRIBED

WITH ALL DEVOTION AND REVERENCE

TO

JOSEPH MAZZINI.

1867.

A SONG OF ITALY.

Upon a windy night of stars that fell
At the wind's spoken spell,
Swept with sharp strokes of agonizing light
From the clear gulf of night,
Between the fixed and fallen glories one
Against my vision shone,
More fair and fearful and divine than they
That measure night and day,
And worthier worship; and within mine eyes
The formless folded skies
Took shape and were unfolded like as flowers.
And I beheld the hours
As maidens, and the days as laboring men,
And the soft nights again
As wearied women to their own souls wed,
And ages as the dead.
And over these living, and them that died,
From one to the other side
A lordlier light than comes of earth or air
Made the world's future fair.
A woman like to love in face, but not
A thing of transient lot—
And like to hope, but having hold on truth—
And like to joy or youth,
Save that upon the rock her feet were set—
And like what men forget,
Faith, innocence, high thought, laborious peace—
And yet like none of these,
Being not as these are mortal, but with eyes
That sounded the deep skies
And clove like wings or arrows their clear way
Through night and dawn and day—
So fair a presence over star and sun
Stood, making these as one.
For in the shadow of her shape were all
Darkened and held in thrall,
So mightier rose she past them; and I felt
Whose form, whose likeness knelt
With covered hair and face and clasped her knees;
And knew the first of these
Was Freedom, and the second Italy.
And what sad words said she
For mine own grief I knew not, nor had heart
Therewith to bear my part
And set my songs to sorrow; nor to hear
How tear by sacred tear
Fell from her eyes as flowers or notes that fall
In some slain feaster's hall
Where in mid music and melodious breath
Men singing have seen death.
So fair, so lost, so sweet she knelt; or so
In our lost eyes below
Seemed to us sorrowing; and her speech being said,
Fell, as one who falls dead.
And for a little she too wept, who stood
Above the dust and blood
And thrones and troubles of the world; then spake,
As who bids dead men wake.

'Because the years were heavy on thy head;
Because dead things are dead;
Because thy chosen on hill-side, city and plain
Are shed as drops of rain;
Because all earth was black, all heaven was blind,
And we cast out of mind;
Because men wept, saying *Freedom*, knowing of thee,
Child, that thou wast not free:
Because wherever blood was not shame was
Where thy pure foot did pass;
Because on Promethean rocks distent
Thee fouler eagles rent;
Because a serpent stains with slime and foam
This that is not thy Rome;
Child of my womb, whose limbs were made in me,
Have I forgotten thee?
In all thy dreams through all these years on wing,

Hast thou dreamed such a thing?
The mortal mother-bird outsoars her nest,
The child outgrows the breast;
But suns as stars shall fall from heaven and cease,
Ere we twain be as these;
Yea, utmost skies forget their utmost sun,
Ere we twain be not one.
My lesser jewels sewn on skirt and hem,
I have no heed of them
Obscured and flawed by sloth or craft or power;
But thou, that wast my flower,
The blossom bound between my brows and worn
In sight of even and morn
From the last ember of the flameless west
To the dawn's baring breast—
I were not Freedom if thou wert not free,
Nor thou wert Italy.
O mystic rose ingrained with blood, impearled
With tears of all the world!
The torpor of their blind brute-ridden trance
Kills England and chills France;
And Spain sobs hard through strangling blood; and snows
Hide the huge eastern woes.
But thou, twin-born with morning, nursed of noon,
And blessed of star and moon!
What shall avail to assail thee any more,
From sacred shore to shore?
Have Time and Love not knelt down at thy feet,
Thy sore, thy soiled, thy sweet,
Fresh from the flints and mire of murderous ways
And dust of travelling days?
Hath Time not kissed them, Love not washed them fair,
And wiped with tears and hair?
Though God forget thee, I will not forget;
Though heaven and earth be set
Against thee, O unconquerable child,
Abused, abased, reviled,
Lift thou not less from no funereal bed
Thine undishonored head;
Love thou not less, by lips of thine once prest,
This my now barren breast;
Seek thou not less, being well assured thereof,
O child, my latest love.

For now the barren bosom shall bear fruit,
Songs leap from lips long mute,
And with my milk the mouths of nations fed
Again be glad and red
That were worn white with hunger and sorrow and thirst;
And thou, most fair and first,
Thou whose warm hands and sweet live lips I feel
Upon me for a seal,
Thou whose least looks, whose smiles and little sighs,
Whose passionate pure eyes,
Whose dear fair limbs that neither bonds could bruise
Nor hate of men misuse,
Whose flower-like breath and bosom, O my child,
O mine and undefiled,
Fill with such tears as burn like bitter wine
These mother's eyes of mine,
Thrill with huge passions and primeval pains
The fulness of my veins.
O sweetest head seen higher than any stands,
I touch thee with mine hands,
I lay my lips upon thee, O thou most sweet,
To lift thee on thy feet
And with the fire of mine to fill thine eyes;
I say unto thee, Arise.'

She ceased, and heaven was full of flame and sound,
And earth's old limbs unbound
Shone and waxed warm with fiery dew and seed
Shed through her at this her need;
And highest in heaven, a mother and full of grace,
With no more covered face,
With no more lifted hands and bended knees,
Rose, as from sacred seas
Love, when old time was full of plenteous springs,
That fairest-born of things,
The land that holds the rest in tender thrall
For love's sake in them all,
That binds with words and holds with eyes and hands

All hearts in all men's lands.
So died the dream whence rose the live desire
That here takes form and fire,
A spirit from the splendid grave of sleep
Risen, that ye should not weep,
Should not weep more nor ever, O ye that hear
And ever have held her dear,
Seeing now indeed she weeps not who wept sore,
And sleeps not any more.
Hearken ye towards her, O people exalt your eyes;
Is this a thing that dies?

Italia! by the passion of the pain
That bent and rent thy chain;
Italia! by the breaking of the bands,
The shaking of the lands;
Beloved, O men's mother, O men's queen,
Arise, appear, be seen!
Arise, array thyself in manifold
Queen's raiment of wrought gold;
With girdles of green freedom, and with red
Roses, and white snow shed
Above the flush and frondage of the hills
That all thy deep dawn fills
And all thy clear night veils and warms with wings
Spread till the morning sings;
The rose of resurrection, and the bright
Breast lavish of the light,
The lady lily like the snowy sky
Ere the stars wholly die;
As red as blood, and whiter than a wave
Flowers grown as from thy grave,
From the green fruitful grass in Maytime hot,
Thy grave, where thou art not.
Gather the grass and weave, in sacred sign
Of the ancient earth divine,
The holy heart of things, the seed of birth,
The mystical warm earth.
O thou her flower of flowers, with treble braid
Be thy sweet head arrayed,
In witness of her mighty motherhood
Who bore thee and found thee good,
Her fairest-born of children, on whose head
Her green and white and red
Are hope and light and life, inviolate
Of any latter fate.
Fly, O our flag, through deep Italian air,
Above the flags that were,
The dusty shreds of shameful battle-flags
Trampled and rent in rags,
As withering woods in autumn's bitterest breath
Yellow, and black as death;
Black as crushed worms that sicken in the sense,
And yellow as pestilence.
Fly, green as summer and red as dawn and white
As the live heart of light,
The blind bright womb of color unborn, that brings
Forth all fair forms of things,
As freedom all fair forms of nations dyed
In divers-colored pride.
Fly, fleet as wind on every wind that blows
Between her seas and snows,
From Alpine white, from Tuscan green, and where
Vesuvius reddens air.
Fly! and let all men see it, and all kings wail,
And priests wax faint and pale,
And the cold hordes that moan in misty places
And the funereal races
And the sick serfs of lands that wait and wane
See thee and hate thee in vain.
In the clear laughter of all winds and waves,
In the blown grass of graves,
In the long sound of fluctuant boughs of trees,
In the broad breath of seas,
Bid the sound of thy flying folds be heard;
And as a spoken word
Full of that fair god and that merciless
Who rends the Pythoness,
So be the sound and so the fire that saith
She feels her ancient breath
And the old blood move in her immortal veins.

Strange travail and strong pains,
Our mother, hast thou borne these many years
While thy pure blood and tears

Mixed with the Tyrrhene and the Adrian
sea;
Light things were said of thee,
As of one buried deep among the dead;
Yea, she hath been, they said,
She was when time was younger, and is
not:
The very cerecloths rot
That flutter in the dusty wind of death,
Not moving with her breath;
Far seasons and forgotten years enfold
Her dead corpse old and cold
With many windy winters and pale
springs:
She is none of this world's things.
Though her dead head like a live garland
wear
The golden-growing hair
That flows over her breast down to her
feet,
Dead queens, whose life was sweet
In sight of all men living, have been
found
So cold, so clad, so crowned,
With all things faded and with one thing
fair,
Their old immortal hair,
When flesh and bone turned dust at touch
of day:
And she is dead as they.

So men said sadly, mocking; so the slave,
Whose life was his soul's grave:
So, pale or red with change of fast and
feast,
The sanguine-sandalled priest
So the Austrian, when his fortune came to
flood,
And the warm wave was blood;
With wings that widened and with beak
that smote,
So shrieked through either throat
From the hot horror of its northern nest
That double-headed pest;
So, triple-crowned with fear and fraud and
shame,
He of whom treason came,
The herdsman of the Gadarean swine;
So all his ravening kine,
Made fat with poisonous pasture; so not
we,
Mother, beholding thee.
Make answer, O the crown of all our
slain,
Ye that were one, being twain
Twain brethren, twin-born to the second
birth,
Chosen out of all our earth
To be the prophesying stars that say
How hard is night on day,
Stars in serene and sudden heaven rerisen
Before the sun break prison
And ere the moon be wasted; fair first
flowers
In that red wreath of ours
Woven with the lives of all whose lives
were shed
To crown their mother's head
With leaves of civic cypress and thick
yew,
Till the olive bind it too,
Olive and laurel and all loftier leaves
That victory wears or weaves
At her fair feet for her beloved brow;
Hear, for she too hears now,
O Pisacane, from Calabrian sands;
O all heroic hands
Close on the sword-hilt, hands of all her
dead;
O many a holy head,
Bowed for her sake even to her reddening
dust;
O chosen, O pure and just,
Who counted for a small thing life's estate,
And died, and made it great;
Ye whose names mix with all her memo-
ries; ye
Who rather chose to see
Death, than our more intolerable things;
Thou whose name withers kings,
Agesilao; thou too, O chiefliest thou,
The slayer of splendid brow,
Laid where the lying lips of fear deride
The foiled tyrannicide,
Foiled, fallen, slain, scorned, and happy,
being in fame,
Felice, like thy name,
Not like thy fortune; father of the fight,
Having in hand our light.
Ah, happy! for that sudden-swerving
hand
Flung light on all thy land,
Yea, lit blind France with compulsory
ray,
Driven down a righteous way;
Ah, happiest! for from thee the wars be-
gan,
From thee the fresh springs ran;
From thee the lady land that queens the
earth
Gat as she gave new birth,

O sweet mute mouths, O all fair dead of ours,
Fair in our eyes as flowers,
Fair without feature, vocal without voice,
Strong without strength, rejoice!
Hear it with ears that hear not, and on eyes
That see not let it rise,
Rise as a sundawn; be it as dew that drips
On dumb and dusty lips;
Eyes have ye not, and see it; neither ears,
And there is none but hears.
This is the same for whom ye bled and wept;
She was not dead, but slept.
This is that very Italy which was
And is and shall not pass.

But thou, though all were not well done, O chief,
Must thou take shame or grief?
Because one man is not as thou or ten,
Must thou take shame for men?
Because the supreme sunrise is not yet,
Is the young dew not wet?
Wilt thou not yet abide a little while,
Soul without fear or guile,
Mazzini,—O our prophet, O our priest,
A little while at least?
A little hour of doubt and of control,
Sustain thy sacred soul;
Withhold thine heart, our father, but an hour;
Is it not here, the flower,
Is it not blown and fragrant from the root,
And shall not be the fruit?
Thy children, even thy people thou hast made,
Thine, with thy words arrayed,
Clothed with thy thoughts and girt with thy desires,
Yearn up toward thee as fires.
Art thou not father, O father, of all these?
From thine own Genoese
To where of nights the lower extreme lagune
Feels its Venetian moon,
Nor suckling's mouth nor mother's breast set free
But hath that grace through thee.
The milk of life on death's unnatural brink
Thou gavest them to drink,
The natural milk of freedom; and again
They drank, and they were men.
The wine and honey of freedom and of faith
They drank, and cast off death.
Bear with them now; thou art holier: yet endure,
Till they as thou be pure.
Their swords at least that stemmed half Austria's tide
Bade all its bulk divide;
Else, though fate bade them for a breath's space fall,
She had not fallen at all.
Not by their hands they made time's promise true;
Not by their hands, but through.
Nor on Custoza ran their blood to waste,
Nor fell their fame defaced
Whom stormiest Adria with tumultuous tides
Whirls undersea and hides.
Not his, who from the sudden-settling deck
Looked over death and wreck
To where the mother's bosom shone, who smiled
As he, so dying, her child;
For he smiled surely, dying, to mix his death
With her memorial breath;
Smiled, being most sure of her, that in no wise,
Die whoso will, she dies:
And she smiled surely, fair and far above,
Wept not, but smiled for love.
Thou too, O splendor of the sudden sword
That drove the crews abhorred
From Naples and the siren-footed strand
Flash from thy master's hand
Shine from the middle summer of the seas
To the old Æolides,
Outshine their fiery fumes of burning night,
Sword, with thy midday light;
Flame as a beacon from the Tyrrhene foam
To the rent heart of Rome,
From the island of her lover and thy lord,
Her saviour and her sword,
In the fierce year of failure and of fame,
Art thou not yet the same
That wast as lightning swifter than all wings
In the blind face of kings?

When priests took counsel to devise despair,
And princes to forswear,
She clasped thee, O her sword and flag-bearer
And staff and shield to her,
O Garibaldi; need was hers and grief,
Of thee and of the chief,
And of another girt in arms to stand
As good of hope and hand,
As high of soul and happy, albeit indeed
The heart should burn and bleed,
So but the spirit shake not nor the breast
Swerve, but abide its rest.
As theirs did and as thine, though ruin clomb
The highest wall of Rome,
Though treason stained and spilt her lustral water,
And slaves led slaves to slaughter,
And priests, praying and slaying, watched them pass
From a strange France, alas,
That was not freedom; yet when these were past,
Thy sword and thou stood fast,
Till new men seeing thee where Sicilian waves
Hear now no sound of slaves,
And where thy sacred blood is fragrant still
Upon the Bitter Hill,
Seeing by that blood one country saved and stained,
Less loved thee crowned than chained,
And less now only than the chief: for he,
Father of Italy,
Uphore in holy hands the babe new-born
Through loss and sorrow and scorn,
Of no man led, of many men reviled;
Till lo, the new-born child
Gone from between his hands, and in its place,
Lo, the fair mother's face.
Blessed is he of all men, being in one
As father to her and son,
Blessed of all men living, that he found
Her weak limbs bared and bound,
And in his arms and in his bosom bore,
And as a garment wore
Her weight of want, and as a royal dress
Put on her weariness.
As in faith's hoariest histories men read,
The strong man bore at need
Through roaring rapids when all heaven was wild
The likeness of a child
That still waxed greater and heavier as he trod,
And altered, and was God.
Praise him, O winds that move the molten air,
O light of days that were,
And light of days that shall be; land and sea,
And heaven and Italy:
Praise him, O storm and summer, shore and wave,
O skies and every grave;
O weeping hopes, O memories beyond tears,
O many and murmuring years,
O sounds far off in time and visions far,
O sorrow with thy star;
And joy with all thy beacons; ye that mourn,
And ye whose light is born;
O fallen faces, and O souls arisen,
Praise him from tomb and prison,
Praise him from heaven and sunlight; and ye floods,
And windy waves of woods;
Ye valleys and wild vineyards, ye lit lakes
And happier hillsides brakes,
Untrampled by the cursed feet that trod
Fields golden from their god,
Fields of their god forsaken, whereof none
Sees his face in the sun,
Hears his voice from the floweriest wilderness;
And, barren of his tresses,
Ye bays unplucked and laurels unentwined,
That no men break or bind,
And myrtles long forgetful of the sword,
And olives unadored,
Wisdom and love, white hands that save and slay,
Praise him; and ye as they,
Praise him, O gracious might of dews and rains
That feed the purple plains,
O sacred sunbeams bright as bare steel drawn,
O cloud and fire and dawn;
Red hills of flame, white Alps, green Apennines,
Banners of blowing pines,
Standards of stormy snows, flags of light leaves,
Three wherewith Freedom weaves

One ensign that once woven and once unfurled
Makes day of all a world,
Makes blind their eyes who knew not, and outbraves
The waste of iron waves;
Ye fields of yellow fullness, ye fresh fountains,
And mists of many mountains;
Ye moons and seasons, and ye days and nights;
Ye starry-headed heights,
And gorges melting sunward from the snow,
And all strong streams that flow,
Tender as tears, and fair as faith, and pure
As hearts made sad and sure
At once by many sufferings and one love;
O mystic deathless dove
Held to the heart of earth and in her hands
Cherished, O lily of lands,
White rose of time, dear dream of praises past—
For such as these thou wast,
That art as eagles setting to the sun,
As fawns that leap and run,
As a sword carven with keen floral gold,
Sword for an armed god's hold,
Flower for a crowned god's forehead—O our land,
Reach forth thine holiest hand,
O mother of many sons and memories,
Stretch out thine hand to his
That raised and gave thee life to run and leap
When thou wast full of sleep,
That touched and stung thee with young blood and breath
When thou wast hard on death.
Praise him, O all her cities and her crowns,
Her towers and thrones of towns;
O noblest Brescia, scarred from foot to head
And breast-deep in the dead,
Praise him from all the glories of the graves
That yellow Mela laves
With gentle and golden water, whose fair flood
Ran wider with thy blood:
Praise him, O born of that heroic breast,
O nursed thereat and blest,
Verona, fairer than thy mother fair,
But not more brave to bear:
Praise him, O Milan, whose imperial tread
Bruised once the German head;
Whose might, by northern swords left desolate,
Set foot on fear and fate:
Praise him, O long mute mouth of melodies,
Mantua, with louder keys,
With mightier chords of music even than rolled
From the large harps of old,
When thy sweet singer of golden throat and tongue,
Praising his tyrant, sung;
Though now thou sing not as of other days,
Learn late a better praise.
Not with the sick sweet lips of slaves that sing,
Praise thou no priest or king,
No brow-bound laurel of discoloured leaf,
But him, the crownless chief.
Praise him, O star of sun-forgotten times,
Among their creeds and crimes
That wast a fire of witness in the night,
Padua, the wise men's light:
Praise him, O sacred Venice, and the sea
That now exults through thee,
Full of the mighty morning and the sun,
Free of things dead and done;
Praise him from all the years of thy great grief,
That shook thee like a leaf
With winds and snows of torment, rain that fell
Red as the rains of hell,
Storms of black thunder and of yellow flame,
And all ill things but shame;
Praise him with all thy holy heart and strength;
Through thy walls' breadth and length
Praise him with all thy people, that their voice
Bid the strong soul rejoice,
The fair clear supreme spirit beyond stain,
Pure as the depth of pain,
High as the head of suffering, and secure
As all things that endure.
More than thy blind lord of an hundred years
Whose name our memory hears,
Home-bound from harbours of the Byzantine
Made tributary of thine,
Praise him who gave no gifts from oversea,
But gave thyself to thee.
O mother Genoa, through all years that run,
More than that other son,

Who first beyond the seas of sunset prest
Even to the unfooted west,
Whose black-blown flag scared from their sheltering seas
The unknown Atlantides,
And as flame climbs through cloud and vapour clomb
Through streams of storm and foam,
Till half in sight they saw land heave and swim—
More than this man praise him.
One found a world new-born from virgin sea ;
And one found Italy.
O heavenliest Florence, from the mouths of flowers
Fed by melodious hours,
From each sweet mouth that kisses light and air,
Thou whom thy fate made fair,
As a bound vine or any flowering tree,
Praise him who made thee free.
For no grape-gatherers trampling out the wine
Tread thee, the fairest vine ;
For no man binds thee, no man bruises, none
Does with thee as these have done.
From where spring hears loud through ner long lit vales
Triumphant nightingales,
In many a fold of fiery foliage hidden.
Withheld as things forbidden,
But clamorous with innumerable delight
In May's red, green, and white,
In the far-floated standard of the spring,
That bids men also sing,
Our flower of flags, our witness that are free,
Our lamp for land and sea ;
From where Majano feels through corn and vine
Spring move and melt as wine,
And Fiesole's embracing arms enclose
The immeasurable rose ;
From hill-sides plumed with pine, and heights wind-worn
That feel the refluent morn,
Or where the moon's face warm and passionate
Burns, and men's hearts grow great,
And the swoln eyelids labor with sweet tears,
And in their burning ears
Sound throbs like flame, and in their eyes new light
Kindles the trembling night ;
From faint illumined fields and starry valleys
Wherefrom the hill-wind sallies,
From Valombrosa, from Valdarno raise
One Tuscan tune of praise.
O lordly city of the field of death,
Praise him with equal breath,
From sleeping streets and gardens, and the stream
That threads them as a dream
Threads without light the untravelled ways of sleep
With eyes that smile or weep ;
From the sweet sombre beauty of wave and wall
That fades and does not fall ;
From colored domes and cloisters fair with fame,
Praise thou and thine his name.
Thou too, O little laurelled town of towers,
Clothed with the flame of flowers,
From windy ramparts girdled with young gold,
From thy sweet hill-side fold
Of wallflowers and the acacia's belted bloom
And every blowing plume,
Halls that saw Dante speaking, chapels fair
As the outer hills and air,
Praise him who feeds the fire that Dante fed,
Our highest heroic head,
Whose eyes behold through floated cloud and flame
The maiden face of fame
Like April's in Valdelsa ; fair as flowers,
And patient as the hours ;
Sad with slow sense of time, and bright with faith
That levels life and death ;
The final fame, that with a foot sublime
Treads down reluctant time ;
The fame that waits and watches and is wise,
A virgin with chaste eyes,
A goddess who takes hands with great men's grief ;
Praise her, and him, our chief.
Praise him, O Siena, and thou her deep green spring,
O Fonte Branda, sing :

Shout from the red clefts of thy fiery crags,
Shake out thy flying flags
In the long wind that streams from hill to hill;
Bid thy full music fill
The desolate red waste of sunset air
And fields the old time saw fair,
But now the hours ring void through ruined lands,
Wild work of mortal hands;
Yet through thy dead Maremma let his name
Take flight and pass in flame,
And the red ruin of disastrous hours
Shall quicken into flowers.
Praise him, O fiery child of sun and sea,
Naples, who bade thee be;
For till he sent the swords that scourge and save,
Thou was not, but thy grave.
But more than all these praise him and give thanks,
Thou, from thy Tiber's banks,
From all thine hills and from thy supreme dome,
Praise him, O risen Rome.
Let all thy children cities at thy knee
Lift up their voice with thee,
Saying 'for thy love's sake and our perished grief
We laud thee, O our chief;'
Saying 'for thine hand and help when hope was dead
We thank thee, O our head;'
Saying 'for thy voice and face within our sight
We bless thee, O our light;
For waters cleansing us from days defiled
We praise thee, O our child.'

So with an hundred cities' mouths in one
Praising thy supreme son,
Son of thy sorrow, O mother, O maid and mother,
Our queen, who serve none other,
Our lady of pity and mercy, and full of grace,
Turn otherwhere thy face,
Turn for a little and look what things are these
Now fallen before thy knees;
Turn upon them thine eyes who hated thee,
Behold what things they be,
Italia: these are stubble that were steel,
Dust, or a turning wheel;
As leaves, as snow, as sand, that were so strong;
And howl, for all their song,
And wail, for all their wisdom; they that were
So great, they are all stript bare,
They are made empty of beauty, and all abhorred;
They are shivered, and their sword;
They are slain who slew, they are heartless who were wise;
Yea, turn on these thine eyes,
O thou, soliciting with soul sublime
The obscure soul of time,
Thou, with the wounds thy holy body bears
From broken swords of theirs,
Thou, with the sweet swoln eyelids that have bled
Tears for thy thousands dead,
And upon these, whose swords drank up like dew
The sons of thine they slew,
These, whose each gun blasted with murdering mouth
Live flowers of thy fair south,
These, whose least evil told in alien ears
Turned men's whole blood to tears,
These, whose least sin remembered for pure shame
Turned all those tears to flame,
Even upon these, when breaks the extreme blow
And all the world cries woe,
When heaven reluctant rains long-suffering fire
On these and their desire,
When his wind shakes them and his waters whelm
Who rent thy robe and realm,
When they that poured thy dear blood forth as wine
Pour forth their own for thine,
On these, on these have mercy: not in hate,
But full of sacred fate,
Strong from the shrine and splendid from the god,
Smite, with no second rod.
Because they spared not, do thou rather spare:
Be not one thing they were.
Let not one tongue of theirs who hate thee say
That thou wast even as they.

Because their hands were bloody, be thine white ;
Show light where they shed night :
Because they are foul, be thou the rather pure ;
Because they are feeble, endure ;
Because they had no pity, have thou pity.

And thou, O supreme city,
O priestless Rome that shalt be, take in trust
Their names, their deeds, their dust,
Who held life less than thou wert ; be the least
To thee indeed a priest,
Priest and burnt-offering and blood-sacrifice
Given without prayer or price,
A holier immolation than men wist,
A costlier eucharist,
A sacrament more saving ; bend thine head
Above these many dead
Once, and salute with thine eternal eyes
Their lowest head that lies.
Speak from thy lips of immemorial speech
If but one word for each.
Kiss but one kiss on each thy dead son's mouth
Fallen dumb or north or south.
And laying but once thine hand on brow and breast,
Bless them, through whom thou art blest.
And saying in ears of these thy dead 'Well done,'
Shall they not hear 'O son'?
And bowing thy face to theirs made pale for thee,
Shall the shut eyes not see?
Yea, through the hollow-hearted world of death,
As light, as blood, as breath,
Shall there not flash and flow the fiery sense,
The pulse of prescience?
Shall not these know as in times overpast
Thee loftiest to the last?
For times and wars shall change, kingdoms and creeds,
And dreams of men, and deeds ;
Earth shall grow grey with all her golden things,
Pale peoples and hoar kings ;
But though her thrones and towers of nations fall,
Death has no part in all ;
In the air, nor in the imperishable sea,
Nor heaven, nor truth, nor thee.
Yea, let all sceptre-stricken nations lie,
But live thou though they die ;
Let their flags fade as flowers that storm can mar,
But thine be like a star ;
Let England's, if it float not for men free,
Fall, and forget the sea ;
Let France's, if it shadow a hateful head,
Drop as a leaf drops dead ;
Thine let what storm soever smite the rest
Smite as it seems him best ;
Thine let the wind that can, by sea or land,
Wrest from thy banner-hand.
Die they in whom dies freedom, die and cease,
Though the world weep for these ;
Live thou and love and lift when these lie dead
The green and white and red.

O our Republic that shalt bind in bands
The kingdomless far lands
And link the chainless ages ; thou that wast
With England ere she past
Among the faded nations, and shalt be
Again, when sea to sea
Calls through the wind and light of morning time,
And throneless clime to clime
Makes antiphonal answer ; thou that art
Where one man's perfect heart
Burns, one man's brow is brightened for thy sake,
Thine, strong to make or break ;
O fair Republic hallowing with stretched hands
The limitless free lands,
When all men's heads for love, not fear, bow down
To thy sole royal crown,
As thou to freedom ; when man's life smells sweet;
And at thy bright swift feet
A bloodless and a bondless world is laid ;
Then, when thy men are made,
Let these indeed as we in dreams behold
One chosen of all thy fold,
One of all fair things fairest, one exalt
Above all fear or fault,
One unforgetful of unhappier men
And us who loved her then ;

With eyes that outlook suns and dream on graves ;
With voice like quiring waves ;
With heart the holier for their memories' sake
Who slept that she might wake ;
With breast the sweeter for that sweet blood lost,
And all the milkless cost ;
Lady of earth, whose large equality
Bends but to her and thee ;
Equal with heaven, and infinite of years,
And splendid from quenched tears ;
Strong with old strength of great things fallen and fled,
Diviner for her dead ;
Chaste of all stains and perfect from all scars,
Above all storms and stars,
All winds that blow through time, all waves that foam,
Our Capitolian Rome.

1867

ODE ON PROCLAMATION OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC.

SEPTEMBER 4TH, 1870.

À VICTOR HUGO.

αἴλινον αἴλινον εἰπὲ, το δ' εὖ νικάτω

STROPHE 1.

With songs and crying and sound of acclamations,
Lo, the flame risen, the fire that falls in showers !
Hark ; for the word is out among the nations :
Look; for the light is up upon the hours ;
O fears, O shames, O many tribulations,
Yours were all yesterdays, but this day ours.
Strong were your bonds linked fast with lamentations,
With groans and tears built into walls and towers :
Strong were your works and wonders of high stations,
Your forts blood-based, and rampires of your powers :
Lo now the last of divers desolations,
The hand of time, that gathers hosts like flowers ;
Time, that fills up and pours out generations;
Time, at whose breath confounded empire cowers.

STR. 2.

What are these moving in the dawn's red gloom ?
What is she waited on by dread and doom,
Ill ministers of morning, bondsmen born of night ?
If that head veiled and bowed be morning's head,
If she come walking between doom and dread,
Who shall rise up with song and dance before her sight ?

Are not the night's dead heaped about her feet ?
Is not death swollen, and slaughter full of meat ?
What, is their feast a bride-feast, where men sing and dance ?
A bitter, a bitter bride-song and a shrill
Should the house raise that such bride-followers fill,
Wherein defeat weds ruin, and takes for bride-bed France.

For nineteen years deep shame and sore desire
Fed from men's hearts with hungering fangs of fire,
And hope fell sick with famine for the food of change.
Now is change come, but bringing funeral urns ;
Now is day nigh, but the dawn blinds and burns ;
Now time long dumb hath language, but the tongue is strange.

We that have seen her not our whole lives long,
We to whose ears her dirge was cradle-song,
The dirge men sang who laid in earth her living head,
Is it by such light that we live to see
Rise, with rent hair and raiment, Liberty?
Does her grave open only to restore her dead ?

Ah, was it this we looked for, looked and prayed,
This hour that treads upon the prayers we made,
This ravening hour that breaks down good and ill alike ?
Ah, was it thus we thought to see her and hear,
The one love indivisible and dear ?
Is it her head that hands which strike down wrong must strike?

STR. 3.

Where is hope, and promise where, in all these things,
Shocks of strength with strength, and jar of hurtling kings ?
Who of all men, who will show us any good ?
Shall these lightenings of blind battles give men light ?
Where is freedom ? who will bring us in her sight,
That have hardly seen her footprint where she stood ?

STR. 4.

Who is this that rises red with wounds and splendid,
All her breast and brow made beautiful with scars,
Burning bare as naked daylight, undefended,
In her hands for spoils her splintered prison-bars,
In her eyes the light and fire of long pain ended,
In her lips a song as of the morning stars ?

STR. 5.

O torn out of thy trance,
O deathless, O my France,
O many-wounded mother, O redeemed to reign !
O rarely sweet and bitter
The bright brief tears that glitter
On thine unclosing eyelids, proud of their own pain ;
The beautiful brief tears
That wash the stains of years
White as the names immortal of thy chosen and slain.
O loved so much so long,
O smitten with such wrong,
O purged at last and perfect without spot or stain,
Light of the light of man,
Reborn republican,
At last, O first Republic, hailed in heaven again !
Out of the obscene eclipse
Re-risen, with burning lips
To witness for us if we looked for thee in vain.

STR. 6.

Thou wast the light whereby men saw
Light, thou the trumpet of the law
Proclaiming manhood to mankind ;
And what if all these years were blind
And shameful ? hath the sun a flaw
Because one hour hath power to draw
Mist round him wreathed as links to bind ?
And what if now keen anguish drains
The very wellspring of thy veins
And very spirit of thy breath ?
The life outlives them and disdains ;
The sense which makes the soul remains,
And blood of thought which travaileth
To bring forth hope with procreant pains
O thou that satest bound in chains
Between thine hills and pleasant plains
As whom his own soul vanquisheth,
Held in the bonds of his own thought,
Whence very death can take off nought

Nor sleep, with bitterer dreams than death,—
What though thy thousands at thy knees
Lie thick as grave-worms feed on these,
Though thy green fields and joyous places
Are populous with blood-blackening faces
And wan limbs eaten by the sun?
Better an end of all men's races,
Better the world's whole work were done.
And life wiped out of all our traces,
And there were left to time not one,
Than such as these that fill thy graves
Should sow in slaves the seed of slaves.

ANTISTROPHE 1.

Not of thy sons, O mother many-wounded,
Not of thy sons are slaves ingraffed and grown.
Was it not thine, the fire whence light rebounded
From kingdom on rekindling kingdom thrown,
From hearts confirmed on tyrannies confounded,
From earth on heaven, fire mightier than his own?
Not thine the breath wherewith time's clarion sounded,
And all the terror in the trumpet blown?
The voice whereat the thunders stood astounded
As at a new sound of a God unknown?
And all the seas and shores within them bounded
Shook at the strange speech of thy lips alone,
And all the hills of heaven, the storm-surrounded,
Trembled, and all the night sent forth a groan.

ANT. 2.

What hast thou done that such an hour should be
More than another clothed with blood to thee?
Thou hast seen many a bloodred hour before this one.
What art thou that thy lovers should misdoubt?
What is this hour that it should cast hope out?
If hope turn back and fall from thee, what hast thou done?
Thou hast done ill against thine own soul; yea,
Thine own soul hast thou slain and burnt away,
Dissolving it with poison into foul thinfame.
Thine own life and creation of thy fate
Thou hast set thy hand to unmake and discreate;
And now thy slain soul rises between dead and doom.

Yea, this is she that comes between them led;
That veiled head is thine own soul's buried head,
The head that was as morning's in the whole world's sight.
These wounds are deadly on thee, but deadlier
Those wounds the ravenous poison left on her;
How shall her weak hands hold thy weak hands up to fight?

Ah, but her fiery eyes, her eyes are these
That gazing, make thee shiver to the knees
And the blood leap within thee, and the strong joy rise.
What, doth her sight yet make thine heart to dance?
O France, O freedom, O the soul of France,
Are ye then quickened, gazing in each other's eyes?

Ah, and her words, the words wherewith she sought thee
Sorrowing, and bare in hand the robe she wrought thee
To wear when soul and body were again made one,
And fairest among women, and a bride.
Sweet-voiced to sing the bridegroom to her side,
The spirit of man, the bridegroom brighter than the sun!

ANT. 3.

Who shall help me? who shall take me by the hand?
Who shall teach mine eyes to see, my feet to stand,
Now my foes have stripped and wounded me by night?

Who shall heal me? who shall come to take my part?
Who shall set me as a seal upon his heart,
As a seal upon his arm made bare for fight?

ANT. 4.

If thou know not, O thou fairest among women,
If thou see not where the signs of him abide,
Lift thine eyes up to the light that stars grow dim in,
To the morning whence he comes to take thy side.
None but he can bear the light that love wraps him in,
When he comes on earth to take himself a bride.

ANT. 5.

Light of light, name of names,
Whose shadows are live flames,
The soul that moves the wings of worlds upon their way:
Life, spirit, blood and breath
In time and change and death
Substant through strength and weakness, ardor and decay;
Lord of the lives of lands,
Spirit of man, whose hands
Weave the web through wherein man's centuries fall as prey;
That art within our will
Power to make, save, and kill,
Knowledge and choice, to take extremities and weigh;
In the soul's hand to smite
Strength, in the soul's eye sight;
That to the soul art even as is the soul to clay;
Now to this people be
Love; come, to set them free,
With feet that tread the night, with eyes that sound the day.

ANT. 6.

Thou that wast on their fathers dead
As effluent God effused and shed,
Heaven to be handled, hope made flesh,
Break for them now time's iron mesh;
Give them thyself for hand and head,
Thy breath for life, thy love for bread,
Thy thought for spirit to refresh,
Thy bitterness to pierce and sting,
Thy sweetness for a healing spring,
Be to them knowledge, strength, life, light,
Thou to whose feet the centuries cling
And in the wide warmth of thy wing
Seek room and rest as birds by night,
O thou the kingless people's king,
To whom the lips of silence sing,
Called by thy name of thanksgiving
Freedom, and by thy name of might
Justice, and by thy secret name
Love; the same need is on the same
Men, be the same God in their sight!
From this their hour of bloody tears
Their praise goes up into thine ears,
Their bruised lips clothe thy name with praises,
The song of thee their crushed voice raises,
Their grief seeks joy for psalms to borrow,
With tired feet seeks her through time's mazes
Where each day's blood leaves pale the morrow,
And from their eyes in thine there gazes
A spirit other far than sorrow—
A soul triumphal, white and whole
And single, that salutes thy soul.

EPODE.

All the lights of the sweet heaven that sing together;
All the years of the green earth that bare man free;
Rays and lightings of the fierce or tender weather,
Heights and lowlands, wastes and headlands of the sea,
Dawns and sunset, hours that hold the world in tether,
Be our witnesses and seals of things to be.
Lo the mother, the Republic universal,
Hands that hold time fast, hands feeding men with might,
Lips that sing the song of the earth, that make rehearsal
Of all seasons, and the sway of day with night,
Eyes that see as from a mountain the dispersal,
The huge ruin of things evil, and the flight;

Large exulting limbs, and bosom godlike moulded
Where the man-child hangs, and womb wherein he lay ;
Very life that could it die would leave the soul dead,
Face whereat all fears and forces flee away,
Breath that moves the world as winds a flower-bell folded,
Feet that trampling the gross darkness beat out day.
In the hour of pain and pity,
Sore spent, a wounded city,
Her foster-child seeks to her, stately where she stands ;
In the utter hour of woes,
Wind-shaken, blind with blows,
Paris lays hold upon her, grasps her with child's hands ;
Face kindles face with fire,
Hearts take and give desire,
Strange joy breaks red as tempest on tormented lands.
Day to day, man to man,
Plights love republican,
And faith and memory burn with passion toward each other ;
Hope, with fresh heavens to track,
Looks for a breath's space back,
Where the divine past years reach hands to this their brother ;
And souls of men whose death
Was light to her and breath
Send word of love yet living to the living mother.
They call her, and she hears ;
O France, thy marvellous years,
The years of the strong travail, the triumphant time,
Days terrible with love,
Red-shod with flames thereof,
Call to this hour that breaks in pieces crown and crime ;
The hour with feet to spurn,
Hands to crush, fires to burn
The state whereto no latter foot of man shall climb.
Yea, come what grief now may
By ruinous night or day,
One grief there cannot, one the first and last grief, shame.
Come force to break thee and bow
Down, shame can come not now,
Nor, though hands wound thee, tongues make mockery of thy name :
Come swords and scar thy brow,
No brand there burns it now,
No spot but of thy blood marks thy white-fronted fame.
Now though the mad blind morrow
With shafts of iron sorrow
Should split thine heart, and whelm thine head with sanguine waves ;
Though all that draw thy breath
Bled from all veins to death,
And thy dead body were the grave of all their graves,
And thine unchilded womb
For all their tombs a tomb,
At least within thee as on thee room were none for slaves.
This power thou hast, to be,
Come death or come not, free ;
That in all tongues of time's this praise be chanted of thee,
That in thy wild worst hour
This power put in thee power,
And moved as hope around and hung as heaven above thee,
And while earth sat in sadness
In only thee put gladness,
Put strength and love, to make all hearts of ages love thee.
That in death's face thy chant
Arose up jubilant,
And thy great heart with thy great peril grew more great :
And sweet for bitter tears
Put out the fires of fears,
And love made lovely for thee loveless hell and hate ;
And they that house with error,
Cold shame and burning terror,
Fled from truth risen and thee made mightier than thy fate.
This shall all years remember ;
For this thing shall September
Have only name of honour, only sign of white.
And this year's fearful name,
France, in thine house of fame
Above all names of all thy triumphs shalt thou write,
When, seeing thy freedom stand
Even at despair's right hand,
The cry thou gavest at heart was only of delight.

DIRÆ.

Guai a voi, anime prave.
DANTE.

Soyez maudits, d'abord d'être ce que vous êtes,
Et puis soyez maudits d'obséder les poètes !
VICTOR HUGO.

I.—A DEAD KING.

[*Ferdinand II. entered Malebolge May 22nd, 1859.*]

Go down to hell. This end is good to see ;
The breath is lightened and the sense at ease
Because thou art not ; sense nor breath there is
In what thy body was, whose soul shall be
Chief nerve of hell's pained heart eternally.
Thou art abolished from the midst of these
That art what thou wast : Pius from his knees
Blows off the dust that flecked them, bowed for thee.
Yea, now the long-tongued slack-lipped litanies
Fail, and the priest has no more prayer to sell—
Now the last Jesuit found about thee is
The beast that made thy fouler flesh his cell—
Time lays his finger on thee, saying, 'Cease;
Here is no room for thee ; go down to hell.'

II.—A YEAR AFTER.

If blood throbs yet in this that was thy face,
O thou whose soul was full of devil's faith,
If in thy flesh the worm's bite slackeneth
In some acute red pause of iron days,
Arise now, gird thee, get thee on thy ways,
Breathe off the worm that crawls and fears not breath ;
King, it may be thou shalt prevail on death ;
King, it may be thy soul shall find out grace.
O spirit that hast eased the place of Cain,
Weep now and howl, yea weep now sore; for this
That was thy kingdom hath spat out its king.
Wilt thou plead now with God? behold again,
Thy prayer for thy son's sake is turned to a hiss,
Thy mouth to a snake's whose slime outlives the sting,

III.—PETER'S PENCE FROM PERUGIA.

Iscariot, thou grey-grown beast of blood.
Stand forth to plead ; stand, while red drops run here
And there down fingers shaken with foul fear,
Down the sick shivering chin that stooped and sued,
Bowed to the bosom, for a little food
At Herod's hand, who smites thee cheek and ear.
Cry out, Iscariot ; haply he will hear ;
Cry, till he turn again to do thee good.
Gather thy gold up, Judas, all thy gold,
And buy thee death ; no Christ is here to sell,
But the dead earth of poor men bought and sold,
While year heaps year above thee safe in hell,
To grime thy grey dishonourable head
With dusty shame, when thou art damned and dead.

IV.—PAPAL ALLOCUTION.

'Populo mi, quid tibi feci?'

What hast thou done? Hark, till thine ears wax hot,
Judas; for these and these things hast thou done.
Thou hast made earth faint, and sickened the sweet sun,
With fume of blood that reeks from limbs that rot;
Thou hast washed thine hands and mouth, saying, 'Am I not
Clean?' and thy lips were bloody, and there was none
To speak for man against thee, no, not one;
This hast thou done to us, Iscariot.
Therefore though thou be deaf and heaven be dumb,
A cry shall be from under to proclaim
In the ears of all who shed men's blood or sell
Pius the Ninth, Judas the Second, come
Where Boniface out of the filth and flame
Barks for his advent in the clefts of hell.*

V.—THE BURDEN OF AUSTRIA.

1866.

O DAUGHTER of pride, wasted with misery,
With all the glory that thy shame put on
Stripped off thy shame, O daughter of Babylon,
Yea, whoso be it, yea, happy shall he be
That as thou hast served us hath rewarded thee.
Blessed, who throweth against war's boundary stone
Thy warrior brood, and breaketh bone by bone
Misrule thy son, thy daughter Tyranny.
What landmark shalt thou not remove for shame,
But sitting down there in a widow's weed
Wail; for what fruit is now of thy red fame?
Have thy sons too and daughters learnt indeed
What thing it is to weep, what thing to bleed?
Is it not thou that now art but a name?†

*Dante, 'Inferno,' xix. 53.

† 'A geographical expression.'—Metternich of Italy.

VI.—LOCUSTA.

COME close and see her and hearken. This is she.
Stop the ways fast against the stench that nips
Your nostril as it nears her. Lo, the lips
That between prayer and prayer find time to be
Poisonous, the hands holding a cup and key,
Key of deep hell, cup whence blood reeks and drips;
The loose lewd limbs, the reeling hingeless hips,
The scurf that is not skin but leprosy.
This haggard harlot grey of face and green
With the old hand's cunning mixes her new priest
The cup she mixed her Nero, stirred and spiced.
She lisps of Mary and Jesus Nazarene
With a tongue tuned, and head that bends to the east,
Praying. There are who say she is bride of Christ.

VII.—CELÆNO.

THE blind king hides his weeping eyeless head,
Sick with the helpless hate and shame and awe,
Till food have choked the glutted hell-bird's craw
And the foul cropful creature lie as dead
And soil itself with sleep and too much bread;
So the man's life serves under the beast's law,
And things whose spirit lives in mouth and maw
Share shrieking the soul's board and soil her bed,
Till man's blind spirit, their sick slave resign
Its kingdom to the priests whose souls are swine,
And the scourged serf lie reddening from their rod,
Discrowned, disrobed, dismantled, with lost eyes
Seeking where lurks in what conjectual skies
That triple-headed hound of hell their God.

VIII.—A CHOICE.

FAITH is the spirit that makes man's body and blood
Sacred, to crown when life and death have ceased
His heavenward head for high fame's holy feast ;
But as one swordstroke swift as wizard's rod
Made Cæsar carrion and made Brutus God,
Faith false or true, born patriot or born priest,
Smites into semblance or of man or beast
The soul that feeds on clean or unclean food.
Lo here the faith that lives on its own light,
Visible music ; and lo there, the foul
Shape without shape, the happy throat and howl.
Sword of the spirit of man ! arise and smite,
And sheer through throat and claw and maw and tongue
Kill the beast faith that lives on its own dung.

IX.—THE AUGURS.

LAY the corpse out on the altar ; bid the elect
Slaves clear the ways of service spiritual,
Sweep clean the stalled soul's serviceable stall,
Ere the chief priest's dismantling hands detect
The ulcerous flesh of faith all scaled and specked
Beneath the bandages that hid it all,
And with sharp edgetools œcumenical
The leprous carcases of creeds dissect.
As on the night ere Brutus grew divine
The sick-souled augurs found their ox or swine
Heartless ; so now too by their after art
In the same Rome, at an uncleaner shrine,
Limb from rank limb, and putrid part from part,
They carve the corpse—a beast without a heart.

X.—A COUNSEL.

O STRONG Republic of the nobler years
Whose white feet shine beside time's fairer flood
That shall flow on the clearer for our blood
Now shed, and the less brackish for our tears ;
When time and truth have put out hopes and fears
With certitude, and love has burst the bud,
If these whose powers then down the wind shall scud
Still live to feel thee smite their eyes and ears,
When thy foot's tread hath crushed their crowns and creeds.
Care thou not then to crush the beast that bleeds,
The snake whose belly cleaveth to the sod,
Nor set thine heel on men as on their deeds ;
But let the worm Napoleon crawl untrod,
Nor grant Mastai the gallows of his God.

1869.

XI.—THE MODERATES.

Virtutem videant intabescantque relictâ.

SHE stood before her traitors bound and bare,
Clothed with her wounds and with her naked shame
As with a weed of fiery tears and flame,
Their mother-land, their common weal and care,
And they turned from her and denied, and sware
They did not know this woman nor her name.
And they took truce with tyrants and grew tame,
And gathered up cast crowns and creeds to wear,
And rags and shards regilded. Then she took
In her bruised hands their broken pledge, and eyed
These men so late so loud upon her side
With one inevitable and tearless look,
That they might see her face whom they forsook ;
And they beheld what they had left, and died.

February, 1870.

XII.—INTERCESSION.

Ave Cæsar Imperator, moriturum te saluto.

I.

O Death, a little more, and then the worm;
A little longer, O Death, a little yet,
Before the grave gape and the grave-worm fret;
Before the sanguine-spotted hand infirm
Be rottenness, and that foul brain, the germ
Of all ill things and thoughts, be stopped and set;
A little while, O Death, ere he forget,
A small space more of life, a little term;
A little longer ere he and thou be met,
Ere in that hand that fed thee to thy mind
The poison-cup of life be overset;
A little respite of disastrous breath,
Till the soul lift up her lost eyes, and find
Nor God nor help nor hope, but thee O Death.

II.

Shall a man die before his dying day,
Death? and for him though the utter day be nigh,
Not yet, not yet we give him leave to die;
We give him grace not yet that men should say
He is dead, wiped out, perished and past away.
Till the last bitterness of life go by,
Thou shalt not slay him; till those last dregs run dry,
O thou last lord of life! thou shalt not slay.
Let the lips live a little while and lie,
The hand a little, and falter, and fail of strength,
And the soul shudder and sicken at the sky;
Yea, let him live, though God nor man would let
Save for the curse' sake; then at bitter length,
Lord, will we yield him to thee, but not yet.

III.

Hath he not deeds to do and days to see
Yet ere the day that is to see him dead?
Beats there no brain yet in the poisonous head.
Throbs there no treason? if no such thing there be,
If no such thought, surely this is not he.
Look to the hands then; are the hands not red?
What are the shadows about this man's bed?
Death, was not this the cupbearer to thee?
Nay, let him live then, till in this life's stead
Even he shall pray for that thou hast to give;
Till seeing his hopes and not his memories fled
Even he shall cry upon thee a bitter cry,
That life is worse than death; then let him live,
Till death seem worse than life; then let him die.

IV.

O watcher at the guardless gate of kings,
O doorkeeper that serving at their feast
Hast in thine hand their doomsday drink and seest
With eyeless sight the soul of unseen things;
Thou in whose ear the dumb time coming sings,
Death, priest and king that makest of king and priest
A name, a dream, a less thing than the least,
Hover awhile above him with closed wings,
Till the coiled soul, an evil snake-shaped beast,
Eat its base bodily lair of flesh away;
If haply, or ever its cursed life have ceased,
Or ever thy cold hands cover his head
From sight of France and freedom and broad day,
He may see these and wither and be dead.

PARIS, *September, 1869.*

XIII.—THE SAVIOUR OF SOCIETY.

I.

O son of man, but of what man who knows?
That broughtest healing on thy leathern wings
To priests, and under them didst gather kings,

And madest friends to thee of all man's foe's ;
Before thine incarnation, the tale goes,
Thy virgin mother, pure of sensual stings.
Communed by night with angels of chaste things,
And, full of grace, untimely felt the throes
Of motherhood upon her, and believed
The obscure annunciation made when late
A raven-feathered raven-throated dove
Croaked salutation to the mother of love
Whose misconception was immaculate,
And when her time was come she misconceived.

II.

Thine incarnation was upon this wise,
Saviour ; and out of east and west were led
To thy foul cradle by thy planet red
Shepherds of souls that feed their sheep with lies
Till the utter soul die as the body dies,
And the wise men that ask but to be fed
Though the hot shambles be their board and bed
And sleep on any dunghill shut their eyes,
So they lie warm and fatten in the mire ;
And the high priest enthroned yet in thy name,
Judas, baptised thee with men's blood for hire ;
And now thou hangest nailed to thine own shame
In sight of all time, but while heaven has flame
Shalt find no resurrection from hell-fire.

December, 1869.

XIV.—MENTANA: SECOND ANNIVERSARY.

Est-ce qu'il n'est pas temps que la foudre se prouve,
Cieux profonds, en broyant ce chien, fils de la louve?
La Légende des Siècles :—*Rathbert.*

I.

By the dead body of Hope, the spotless lamb
Thou threwest into the high priest's slaughtering-room,
And by the child Despair born red therefrom
As, thank the secret sire picked out to cram
With spurious spawn thy misconceiving dam,
Thou, like a worm from a town's common tomb,
Didst creep from forth the kennel of her womb.
Born to break down with catapult and ram
Man's builded towers of promise, and with breath
And tongue to track and hunt his hopes to death ;
O, by that sweet dead body abused and slain
And by that child mismothered—dog, by all
Thy curses thou hast cursed mankind withal,
With what curse shall man curse thee back again ?

II.

By the brute soul that made man's soul its food ;
By time grown poisonous with it ; by the hate
And horror of all souls not miscreate ;
By the hour of power that evil hath on good ;
And by the incognizable fatherhood
Which made a whorish womb the shameful gate
That opening let out loose to fawn on fate
A hound half-blooded ravening for man's blood ;
(What prayer but this for these should any say,
Thou dog of hell, but this that Shakespeare said ?)
By night deflowered and desecrated day,
That fall as one curse on one cursed head,
'Cancel his bond of life, dear God, I pray,
That I may live to say, the dog is dead !

1869.

XV.—MENTANA: THIRD ANNIVERSARY.

I.

SUCH prayers last year were put up for thy sake ;
What shall this year do that hath lived to see
The piteous and unpitied end of thee ?

What moan, what cry, what clamour shall
it make,
Seeing as a reed breaks all thine empire
break,
And all thy great strength as a rotten
tree,
Whose branches made broad night from
sea to sea,
And the world shuddered when a leaf would
shake?
From the unknown deep wherein those
prayers were heard,
From the dark height of time there sounds
a word,
Crying, Comfort; though death ride on
this red hour,
Hope waits with eyes that make the
morning dim,
Till liberty, reclothed with love and power
Shall pass and know not if she tread on
him.

II.

The hour for which men hungered and had
thirst,
And dying were loth to die before it
came,
Is it indeed upon thee? and the lame
Late foot of vengeance on thy trace accurst
For years insepulchred and crimes in-
hearsed,
For days marked red or black with blood
or shame,
Hath it outrun thee to tread out thy
name?
This scourge, this hour, is this indeed the
worst?
O clothed and crowned with curses, canst
thou tell?
Have thy dead whispered to thee what
they see
Whose eyes are open in the dark on thee
Ere spotted soul and body take farewell
Or what of life beyond the worm's may
be
Satiate the immitigable hours in hell?

1870.

XVI.—THE DESCENT INTO HELL.

January 9th, 1873.

I.

O NIGHT and death, to whom we grudged
him then,
When in man's sight he stood not yet un-
done,
Your king, your priest, your saviour, and
your son,
We grudge not now, who know that not
again
Shall this curse come upon the sins of
men,
Nor this face look upon the living sun
That shall behold not so abhorred an
one
In all the days whereof his eye takes ken.
The bond is cancelled, and the prayer is
heard
That seemed so long but weak and wasted
breath;
Take him for he is yours, O night and
death
Hell yawns on him whose life was as a
word
Uttered by death in hate of heaven and
light
A curse now dumb upon the lips of night.

II.

What shapes are these and shadows with-
out end
That fill the night full as a storm of
rain
With myriads of dead men and women
slain,
Old with young, child with mother, friend
with friend,
That on the deep mid wintering air impend,
Pale yet with mortal wrath and human
pain,
Who died that this man dead now too
might reign,
Toward whom their hands point and their
faces bend?
The ruining flood would redden earth and
air
If for each soul whose guiltless blood was
shed
There fell but one drop on this one man's
head
Whose soul to-night stands bodiless and
bare,
For whom our hearts give thanks who put
up prayer,
That we have lived to say, the dog is
dead.

XVII.—APOLOGIA.

If wrath embitter the sweet mouth of song,
  And make the sunlight fire before those eyes
  That would drink draughts of peace from the unsoiled skies,
The wrongdoing is not ours, but ours the wrong,
Who hear too loud on earth and see too long
  The grief that dies not with the groan that dies,
  Till the strong bitterness of pity cries
Within us, that our anger should be strong.
For chill is known by heat and heat by chill,
And the desire that hope makes love to still
  By the fear flying beside it or above,
  A falcon fledged to follow a fledgeling dove,
And by the fume and flame of hate of ill
  The exuberant light and burning bloom of love.

SONGS BEFORE SUNRISE.

DEDICATION.

TO

JOSEPH MAZZINI.

TAKE, since you bade it should bear,
These, of the seed of your sowing,
Blossom or berry or weed.
Sweet though they be not, or fair,
That the dew of your word kept growing,
Sweet at least was the seed.

Men bring you love-offerings of tears,
And sorrow the kiss that assuages.
And slaves the hate-offering of wrongs,
And time the thanksgiving of years,
And years the thanksgiving of ages;
I bring you my handful of songs.

If a perfume be left, if a bloom
Let it live till Italia be risen,
To be strewn in the dust of her car
When her voice shall awake from the tomb
England, and France from her prison,
Sisters, a star by a star.

I bring you the sword of a song,
The sword of my spirit's desire,
Feeble; but laid at your feet,
That which was weak shall be strong,
That which was cold shall take fire,
That which was bitter be sweet.

It was wrought not with hands to smite
Nor hewn after swordsmiths fashion,
Nor tempered on anvil of steel;
But with visions and dreams of the night
But with hope and the patience of passion
And the signet of love for a seal.

Be it witness, till one more strong,
Till a loftier lyre, till a rarer
Lute praise her better than I,
Be it witness before you, my song,
That I knew her, the world's banner bearer,
Who shall cry the republican cry.

Yea, even she as at first,
Yea, she alone and none other,
Shall cast down, shall build up, shall bring home;
Slake earth's hunger and thirst,
Lighten, and lead as a mother:
First name of the world's names, Rome

PRELUDE.

BETWEEN the green bud and the red
Youth sat and sang by Time, and shed
From eyes and tresses flowers and tears,
From heart and spirit hopes and fears,
Upon the hollow stream whose bed
Is channelled by the foamless years;
And with the white the gold-haired head
Mixed running locks, and in Time's ears
Youth's dreams hung singing, and Time's truth
Was half not harsh in the ears of Youth.

Between the bud and the blown flower
Youth talked with joy and grief an hour,
With footless joy and wingless grief
And twin-born faith and disbelief
Who share the seasons to devour;
And long ere these made up their sheaf
Felt the winds round him shake and shower
The rose-red and the blood-red leaf,
Delight whose germ grew never grain,
And passion dyed in its own pain.

Then he stood up, and trod to dust
Fear and desire, mistrust and trust,
And dreams of bitter sleep and sweet,
And bound for sandals on his feet
Knowledge and patience of what must
And what things may be, in the heat
And cold of years that rot and rust
And alter; and his spirit's meat
Was freedom, and his staff was wrought
Of strength, and his cloak woven of thought.

For what has he whose will sees clear
To do with doubt and faith and fear,
Swift hopes and slow despondencies?
His heart is equal with the sea's
And with the sea-wind's, and his ear
Is level to the speech of these,
And his soul communes and takes cheer
With the actual earth's equalities,
Air, light, and night, hills, winds, and streams,
And seeks not strength from strengthless dreams.

His soul is even with the sun
Whose spirit and whose eyes are one,
Who seeks not stars by day nor light
And heavy heat of day by night
Him can no God cast down, whom none
Can lift in hope beyond the height
Of fate and nature and things done
By the calm rule of might and right
That bids men be and bear and do,
And die beneath blind skies or blue.

To him the lights of even and morn
Speak no vain things of love or scorn,
Fancies and passions miscreate
By man in things dispassionate.
Nor holds he fellowship forlorn
With souls that pray and hope and hate,
And doubt they had better not been born,
And fain would lure or scare off fate
And charm their doomsman from their doom
And make fear dig its own false tomb.

He builds not half of doubts and half
Of dreams his own soul's cenotaph
Whence hopes and fears with helpless eyes,
Wrapt loose in cast-off cerecloths, rise
And dance and wring their hands and laugh,
And weep thin tears and sigh light sighs,
And without living lips would quaff
The living spring in man that lies.
And drain his soul of faith and strength
It might have lived on a life's length.

He hath given himself and hath not sold
To God for heaven or man for gold,
Or grief for comfort that it gives,
Or joy for grief's restoratives,
He hath given himself to time, whose fold
Shuts in the mortal flock that lives
On its plain pasture's heat and cold
And the equal year's alternatives.
Earth, heaven, and time, death, life, and he,
Endure while they shall be to be.

"Yet between death and life are hours
To flush with love and hide in flowers;
What profit save in these?" men cry:
"Ah, see, between soft earth and sky,

What only good things here are ours !"
They say, "what better wouldst thou try,
What sweeter sing of? or what powers
Serve, that will give thee ere thou die
More joy to sing and be less sad,
More heart to play and grow more glad ?"

Play then and sing ; we too have played,
We likewise, in that subtle shade.
We too have twisted through our hair
Such tendrils as the wild Loves wear,
And heard what mirth the Mænads made,
Till the wind blew our garlands bare
And left their roses disarrayed,
And smote the summer with strange air,
And disengirdled and discrowned
The limbs and locks that vine-wreaths bound.

We too have tracked by star-proof trees
The tempest of the Thyiades
Scare the loud night on hills that hid
The blood-feasts of the Bassarid,
Heard their song's iron cadences
Fright the wolf hungering from the kid,
Outroar the lion-throated seas,
Outchide the north-wind if it chid,
And hush the torrent-tongued ravines
With thunders of their tambourines.

But the fierce flute whose notes acclaim
Dim goddesses of fiery fame,
Cymbal and clamorous kettledrum,
Timbrels and tabrets, all are dumb
That turned the high chill air to flame ;
The singing tongues of fire are numb
That called on Cotys by her name
Edonian, till they felt her come
And maddened, and her mystic face
Lightened along the streams of Thrace.

For Pleasure slumberless and pale,
And Passion with rejected veil,
Pass, and the tempest-footed throng
Of hours that follow them with song
Till their feet flag and voices fail,
And lips that were so loud so long
Learn silence. or a wearier wail ;
So keen is change, and time so strong,
To weave the robes of life and rend
And weave again till life have end.

But weak is change, but strengthless time,
To take the light from heaven or climb
The hills of heaven with wasting feet.
Songs they can stop that earth found meet,
But the stars keep their ageless rhyme :
Flowers they can slay that spring thought sweet.

But the stars keep their spring sublime;
Passions and pleasures can defeat,
Actions and agonies control,
And life and death, but not the soul.

Because man's soul is man's God still,
What wind soever waft his will
Across the waves of day and night
To port or shipwreck, left or right,
By shores and shoals of good and ill ;
And still its flame at mainmast height
Through the rent air that foam-flakes fill
Sustains the indomitable light
Whence only man hath strength to steer
Or helm to handle without fear.

Save his own soul's light overhead,
None leads him, and none ever led,
Across birth's hidden harbor bar,
Past youth where shoreward shallows are,
Through age that drives on toward the red
Vast void of sunset hailed from far,
To the equal waters of the dead ;
Save his own soul he hath no star,
And sinks, except his own soul guide,
Helmless in middle turn of tide.

No blast of air or fire of sun
Puts out the light whereby we run
With girdled loins our lamplit race,
And each from each takes heart of grace
And spirit till his turn be done,
And light of face from each man's face
In whom the light of trust is one ;
Since only souls that keep their place
By their own light, and watch things roll,
And stand, have light for any soul.

A little time we gain from time
To set our seasons in some chime,
For harsh or sweet or loud or low,
With seasons played out long ago
And souls that in their time and prime
Took part with summer or with snow,
Lived abject lives out or sublime,
And had their chance of seed to sow
For service or disservice done
To those days dead and this their son.

A little time that we may fill
Or with such good works or such ill
As loose the bonds or make them strong
Wherein all manhood suffers wrong.
By rose-hung river and light-foot rill
There are who rest not; who think long
Till they discern as from a hill
At the sun's hour of morning song,
Known of souls only, and those souls free,
The sacred spaces of the sea.

THE EVE OF REVOLUTION.

1.

THE trumpets of the four winds of the world
From the ends of the earth blow battle; the night heaves,
With breasts palpitating and wings refurled,
With passion of couched limbs, as one who grieves
Sleeping, and in her sleep she sees uncurled
Dreams serpent-shapen, such as sickness weaves,
Down the wild wind of vision caught and whirled,
Dead leaves of sleep, thicker than autumn leaves,
Shadows of storm-shaped things,
Flights of dim tribes of kings,
The reaping men that reap men for their sheaves,
And, without grain to yield,
Their scythe-swept harvest-field
Thronged thick with men pursuing and fugitives,
Dead foliage of the tree of sleep,
Leaves blood-colored and golden, blown from deep to deep.

2.

I hear the midnight on the mountains cry
With many tongues of thunders, and I hear
Sound and resound the hollow shield of sky
With trumpet-throated winds that charge and cheer,
And through the roar of the hours that fighting fly,
Through flight and fight and all the fluctuant fear,
A sound sublimer than the heavens are high,
A voice more instant than the winds are clear,
Say to my spirit, "Take
Thy trumpet too, and make
A rallying music in the void night's ear,
Till the storm lose its track,
And all the night go back;
Till, as through sleep false life knows true life near,
Thou know the morning through the night,
And through the thunder silence, and through darkness light."

3.

I set the trumpet to my lips and blow.
The height of night is shaken, the skies break,
The winds and stars and waters come and go
By fits of breath and light and sound, that wake
As out of sleep, and perish as the show
Built up of sleep, when all her strengths forsake
The sense-compelling spirit; the depths glow,
The heights flash, and the roots and summits shake
Of earth in all her mountains.
And the inner foamless fountains
And wellsprings of her fast-bound forces quake;
Yea, the whole air of life
Is set on fire of strife,
Till change unmake things made and love remake;
Reason and love, whose names are one,
Seeing reason is the sunlight shed from love the sun.

4.

The night is broken eastward; is it day.
Or but the watchfires trembling here and there,

Like hopes on memory's devastated way,
In moonless wastes of planet-stricken air?
O many-childed mother great and grey,
O multitudinous bosom, and breasts that bare
Our fathers' generations, whereat lay
The weanling peoples and the tribes that were,
Whose new-born mouths long dead
Those ninefold nipples fed,
Dim face with deathless eyes and withered hair,
Fostress of obscure lands,
Whose multiplying hands
Wove the world's web with divers races fair
And cast it waif-wise on the stream,
The waters of the centuries, where thou sat'st to dream;

5.

O many-minded mother and visionary,
Asia, that sawest their westering waters sweep
With all the ships and spoils of time to carry
And all the fears and hopes of life to keep,
Thy vesture wrought of ages legendary
Hides usward thine impenetrable sleep,
And thy veiled head, night's oldest tributary,
We know not if it speak or smile or weep.
But where for us began
The first live light of man
And first-born fire of deeds to burn and leap,
The first war fair as peace
To shine and lighten Greece,
And the first freedom moved upon the deep,
God's breath upon the face of time
Moving, a present spirit, seen of men sublime;

6.

There where our east looks always to thy west,
Our mornings to thine evenings, Greece to thee,
These lights that catch the mountains crest by crest,
Are they of stars or beacons that we see?
Taygetus takes here the winds abreast,
And there the sun resumes Thermopylæ;
The light is Athens where those remnants rest,
And Salamis the sea-wall of that sea.
The grass men tread upon
Is very Marathon
The leaves are of that time-unstricken tree
That storm nor sun can fret
Nor wind, since she that set
Made it her sign to men whose shield was she;
Here, as dead time his deathless things,
Eurotas and Cephisus keep their sleepless springs.

7

O hills of Crete, are these things dead? O waves,
O many-mouthed streams, are these springs dry?
Earth, dost thou feed and hide now none but slaves?
Heaven, hast thou heard of men that would not die?
Is the land thick with only such men's graves
As were ashamed to look upon the sky?
Ye dead, whose name outfaces and outbraves
Death, is the seed of such as you gone by?
Sea, have thy ports not heard
Some Marathonian word
Rise up to landward and to Godward fly?
No thunder, that the skies
Sent not upon us, rise
With fire and earthquake and a cleaving cry?
Nay, light is here, and shall be light,
Though all the face of the hour be overborne with night.

8.

I set the trumpet to my lips and blow.
The night is broken northward; the pale plains
And footless fields of sun-forgotten snow
Feel through their creviced lips and iron veins
Such quick breath labor and such clean blood flow

As summer-stricken spring feels in her pains
When dying May bears June, too young to know
The fruit that waxes from the flower that wanes ;
Strange tyrannies and vast,
Tribes frost-bound to their past,
Lands that are loud all through their length with chains,
Wastes where the wind's wings break,
Displumed by daylong ache
And anguish of blind snows and rack-blown rains,
And ice that seals the White Sea's lips,
Whose monstrous weights crush flat the sides of shrieking ships :

9.

Horrible sights and sounds of the unreached pole,
And shrill fierce climes of inconsolable air,
Shining below the beamless aureole
That hangs about the north-wind's hurtling hair,
A comet-lighted lamp, sublime and sole
Dawn of the dayless heaven where suns despair :
Earth, skies, and waters, smitten into soul,
Feel the hard veil that iron centuries wear
Rent as with hands in sunder,
Such hands as make the thunder
And clothe with form all substance and strip bare :
Shapes, shadows, sounds and lights
Of their dead days and nights
Take soul of life too keen for death to bear ;
Life, conscience, forethought, will, desire,
Flood men's inanimate eyes and dry-drawn hearts with fire.

10.

Light, light, and light! to break and melt in sunder
All clouds and chains that in one bondage bind
Eyes, hands, and spirits, forged by fear and wonder
And sleek fierce fraud with hidden knife behind ;
There goes no fire from heaven before their thunder,
Nor are the links not malleable that wind
Round the snared limbs and souls that ache thereunder ;
The hands are mighty, were the head not blind.
Priest is the staff of king,
And chains and clouds one thing,
And fettered flesh with devastated mind.
Open thy soul to see,
Slave, and thy feet are free ;
Thy bonds and thy beliefs are one in kind,
And of thy fears thine irons wrought
Hang weights upon thee fashioned out of thine own thought.

11.

O soul, O God, O glory of liberty,
To night and day their lightning and their light !
With heat of heart thou kindlest the quick sea,
And the dead earth takes spirit from thy sight ;
The natural body of things is warm with thee,
And the world's weakness parcel of thy might ;
Thou seest us feeble and forceless, fit to be
Slaves of the years that drive us left and right,
Drowned under hours like waves
Wherethrough we row like slaves ;
But if thy finger touch us, these take flight.
If but one sovereign word
Of thy live lips be heard,
What man shall stop us, and what God shall smite ?
Do thou but look in our dead eyes,
They are stars that light each other till thy sundawn rise.

12

Thou art the eye of this blind body of man,
The tongue of this dumb people ; shalt thou not
See, shalt thou speak not for them ? Time is wan
And hope is weak with waiting, and swift thought

Hath lost the wings at heel wherewith he ran,
And on the red pit's edge sits down distraught
To talk with death of days republican
And dreams and fights long since dreamt out and fought;
Of the last hope that drew
To that red edge anew
The firewhite faith of Poland without spot;
Of the blind Russian might,
And fire that is not light;
Of the green Rhineland where thy spirit wrought;
But though time, hope, and memory tire,
Canst thou wax dark as they do, thou whose light is fire?

13.

I set the trumpet to my lips and blow.
The night is broken westward; the wide sea
That makes immortal motion to and fro
From world's end unto world's end, and shall be
When nought now grafted of men's hands shall grow
And as the weed in last year's waves are we
Or spray the sea-wind shook a year ago
From its sharp tresses down the storm to lee,
The moving god that hides
Time in its timeless tides
Wherein time dead seems live eternity,
That breaks and makes again
Much mightier things than men,
Doth it not hear change coming, or not see?
Are the deeps deaf and dead and blind,
To catch no light or sound from landward of mankind?

14.

O thou, clothed round with raiment of white waves,
Thy brave brows lightening through the grey wet air,
Thou, lulled with sea-sounds of a thousand caves,
And lit with sea-shine to thine inland lair,
Whose freedom clothed the naked souls of slaves
And stripped the muffled souls of tyrants bare,
O, by the centuries of thy glorious graves,
By the live light of the earth that was thy care,
Live, thou must not be dead,
Live; let thine armed head
Lift itself up to sunward and the fair
Daylight of time and man,
Thine head republican,
With the same splendor on thine helmless hair
That in his eyes kept up a light
Who on thy glory gazed away their sacred sight;

15.

Who loved and looked their sense to death on thee;
Who taught thy lips imperishable things,
And in thine ears outsang thy singing sea;
Who made thy foot firm on the necks of kings
And thy soul somewhile steadfast—woe are we
It was but for a while, and all the strings
Were broken of thy spirit; yet had he
Set to such tunes and clothed it with such wings
It seemed for his sole sake
Impossible to break,
And woundless of the worm that waits and stings,
The golden-headed worm
Made headless for a term,
The king-snake whose life kindles with the spring's,
To breathe his soul upon her bloom,
And while she marks not turn her temple to her tomb.

16.

By those eyes blinded and that heavenly head
And the secluded soul adorable.
O Milton's land, what ails thee to be dead?
Thine ears are yet sonorous with his shell
That all the songs of all thy sea-line fed
With motive sound of spring-tides at mid swell,
And through thine heart his thought as blood is shed,

Requickening thee with wisdom to do well ;
Such sons were of thy womb,
England, for love of whom
Thy name is not yet writ with theirs that fell,
But, till thou quite forget
What were thy children, yet
On the pale lips of hope is as a spell ;
And Shelley's heart and Landor's mind
Lit thee with latter watch-fires ; why wilt thou be blind ?

17.

Though all were else indifferent, all that live
Spiritless shapes of nations ; though time wait
In vain on hope till these have help to give,
And faith and love crawl famished from the gate ;
Canst thou sit shamed and self-contemplative
With soulless eyes on thy secluded fate ?
Though time forgive them, thee shall he forgive
Whose choice was in thine hand to be so great ?
Who cast out of thy mind
The passion of man's kind,
And made thee and thine old name separate ?
Now when time looks to see
New names and old and thee
Build up our one Republic state by state,
England with France, and France with Spain,
And Spain with sovereign Italy strike hands and reign.

18.

O known and unknown fountain-heads that fill
Our dear life-springs of England ! O bright race
Of streams and waters that bear witness still
To the earth her sons were made of ! O fair face
Of England, watched of eyes death cannot kill,
How should the soul that lit you for a space
Fall through sick weakness of a broken will
To the dead cold damnation of disgrace ?
Such wind of memory stirs
On all green hills of hers,
Such breath of record from so high a place,
From years whose tongue of flame
Prophesied in her name
Her feet should keep truth's bright and burning trace,
We needs must have her heart with us,
Whose hearts are one with man's; she must must be dead or thus.

19.

Who is against us ? who is on our side ?
Whose heart of all men's hearts is one with man's ?
Where art thou that wast prophetess and bride,
When truth and thou trod under time and chance ?
What latter light of what new hope shall guide
Out of the snares of hell thy feet, O France ?
What heel shall bruise these heads that hiss and glide,
What wind-blow out these fen-born fires that dance
Before thee to thy death ?
No light, no life, no breath,
From thy dead eyes and lips shall take the trance,
Till on that deadliest crime
Reddening the feet of time
Who treads through blood and passes, time shall glance
Pardon, and Italy forgive,
And Rome arise up whom thou slewest, and bid thee live.

20.

I set the trumpet to my lips and blow.
The night is broken southward ; the springs run,
The daysprings and the watersprings that flow
Forth with one will from where their source was one,
Out of the might of morning: high and low,
The hungering hills feed full upon the sun,

The thirsting valleys drink of him and glow
As a heart burns with some divine thing done,
Or as blood burns again
In the bruised heart of Spain,
A rose renewed with red new life begun,
Dragged down with thorns and briers,
That puts forth buds like fires
Till the whole tree take flower in unison,
And prince that clogs and priest that clings
Be cast as weeds upon the dunghill of dead things.

21.

Ah heaven, bow down, be nearer ! This is she,
Italia, the world's wonder, the world's care,
Free in her heart ere quite her hands be free,
And lovlier than her lovliest robe of air.
The earth hath voice, and speech is in the sea,
Sounds of great joy, too beautiful to bear ;
All things are glad because of her, but we
Most glad, who loved her when the worst days were.
O sweetest, fairest, first,
O flower, when times were worst,
Thou hadst no stripe wherein we had no share,
Have not our hearts held close,
Kept fast the whole world's rose ?
Have we not worn thee at heart whom none would wear ?
First love and last love, light of lands
Shall we not touch thee full-blown with our lips and hands ?

22.

O too much loved, what shall we say of thee ?
What shall we make of our heart's burning fire,
The passion in our lives that fain would be
Made each a brand to pile into the pyre
That shall burn up thy foemen, and set free
The flame whence thy sun-shadowing wings aspire ?
Love of our life, what more than men are we,
That this our breath for thy sake should expire,
For whom to joyous death
Glad gods might yield their breath,
Great gods drop down from heaven to serve for hire ?
We are but men, are we,
And thou art Italy ;
What shall we do for thee with our desire ?
What gift shall we deserve to give ?
How shall we die to do thee service or how live ?

23.

The very thought in us how much we love thee
Makes the throat sob with love and blinds the eyes,
How should love bear thee, to behold above thee
His own light burning from reverberate skies ?
They give thee light, but the light given them of thee
Makes faint the wheeling fires that fall and rise.
What love, what life, what death of man's should move thee,
What face that lingers or what foot that flies ?
It is not heaven that lights
Thee with such days and nights,
But thou that heaven is lit from in such wise.
O thou her dearest birth,
Turn thee to lighten earth,
Earth too that bore thee and yearns to thee and cries ;
Stand up, shine, lighten, become flame,
Till as the sun's name through all nations be thy name.

24.

I take the trumpet from my lips and sing.
O life immeasurable and imminent love,
And fear like winter leading hope like spring,
Whose flower-bright brows the day-star sits above,
Whose hand unweariable and untiring wing
Strike music from a world that wailed and strove,
Each bright soul born and every glorious thing,
From very freedom to man's joy thereof,
O time, O change and death,
Whose now not hateful breath

But gives the music swifter feet to move
Through sharp remeasuring tones
Of refluent antiphones
More tender-tuned than heart or throat of dove,
Soul into soul, song into song,
Life changing into life, by laws that work not wrong;

25.

O natural force in spirit and sense, that art
One thing in all things, fruit of thine own fruit,
O thought illimitable and infinite heart
Whose blood if life in limbs indissolute
That still keeps hurtless thine invisible part
And inextirpable thy viewless root
Whence all sweet shafts of green and each thy dart
Of sharpening leaf and bud resundering shoot;
Hills that the day-star hails,
Heights that the first beam scales,
And heights that souls outshining suns salute,
Valleys for each mouth born
Free now of plenteous corn,
Waters and woodlands musical or mute;
Free winds that brighten brows as free
And thunder and laughter and lightning of the sovereign sea;

26.

Rivers and springs, and storms that seek your prey
With strong wings ravening through the skies by night
Spirits and stars that hold one choral way;
O light of heaven, and thou the heavenlier light
Aflame above the souls of men that sway
All generations of all years with might;
O sunrise of the repossessing day,
And sunrise of all-renovating right;
And thou, whose trackless foot
Mocks hope's or fear's pursuit,
Swift Revolution, changing depth with height;
And thou, whose mouth makes one
All songs that seek the sun,
Serene Republic of a world made white;
Thou, Freedom, whence the soul's springs ran;
Praise earth for man's sake living, and for earth's sake man.

27.

Make yourselves wings, O tarrying feet of fate,
And hidden hour that hast our hope to bear,
A child-god, through the morning-colored gate
That lets love in upon the golden air,
Dead on whose threshold lies heart-broken hate.
Dead discord, dead injustice, dead despair:
O love long looked for, wherefore wilt thou wait,
And shew not yet the dawn on thy bright hair,
Not yet thine hand released
Refreshing the faint east,
Thine hand reconquering heaven, to seat man there?
Come forth, be born and live
Thou that hast help to give
And light to make man's day of manhood fair;
With flight outflying the sphered sun,
Hasten thine hour and halt not, till thy work be done.

A WATCH IN THE NIGHT.

1.

WATCHMAN, what of the night?—
Storm and thunder and rain,
Lights that waver and wane,
Leaving the watchfires unlit.
Only the balefires are bright,
And the flash of the lamps now and then
From a palace where spoilers sit,
Trampling the children of men.

2.

Prophet, what of the night?—
I stand by the verge of the sea,
Banished, uncomforted, free,
Hearing the noise of the waves
And sudden flashes that smite
Some man's tyrannous head,
Thundering, heard among graves
That hide the hosts of his dead.

3.

Mourners, what of the night?—
All night through without sleep
We weep, and we weep, and we weep.
Who shall give us our sons?
Beaks of raven and kite,
Mouths of wolf and of hound,
Give us them back whom the guns
Shot for your dead on the ground.

4.

Dead men, what of the night?—
Cannon and scaffold and sword,
Horror of gibbet and cord,
Mowed us as sheaves for the grave,
Mowed us down for the right.
We do not grudge or repent.
Freely to freedom we gave
Pledges, till life should be spent.

5.

Statesman, what of the night?—
The night will last me my time.
The gold on a crown or a crime
Looks well enough yet by the lamps.
Have we not fingers to write,
Lips to swear at a need?
Then, when danger decamps,
Bury the word with the deed.

6.

Warrior, what of the night?—
Whether it be not or be
Night, is as one thing to me.
I for one, at the least,
Ask not of dews if they blight,
Ask not of flames if they slay,
Ask not of prince or of priest
How long ere we put them away

7.

Master, what of the night?—
Child, night is not at all
Anywhere, fallen or to fall,
Save in our star-stricken eyes.
Forth of our eyes it takes flight,
Look we but once nor before
Nor behind us, but straight on the skies
Night is not then any more.

8.

Exile, what of the night?—
The tides and the hours run out,
The seasons of death and of doubt,
The night-watches bitter and sore.
In the quicksands leftward and right
My feet sink down under me;
But I know the scents of the shore
And the broad blown breaths of the sea.

9.

Captives, what of the night?—
It rains outside overhead
Always, a rain that is red,
And our faces are soiled with the rain.
Here in the seasons' despite
Day-time and night-time are one,
Till the curse of the kings and the chain
Break, and their toils be undone.

10.

Christian, what of the night?—
I cannot tell; I am blind.
I halt and hearken behind
If haply the hours will go back
And return to the dear dead light,
To the watchfires and stars that of old
Shone where the sky now is black,
Glowed where the earth now is cold

11.

High priest, what of the night?—
The night is horrible here
With haggard faces and fear.
Blood, and the burning of fire.
Mine eyes are emptied of sight,
Mine hands are full of the dust,
If the God of my faith be a liar,
Who is it that I shall trust?

12.

Princes, what of the night?—
Night with pestilent breath
Feeds us, children of death
Clothes us close with her gloom.
Rapine and famine and fright
Crouch at our feet and are fed.
Earth where we pass is a tomb,
Life where we triumph is dead.

13.

Martyrs, what of the night?—
  Nay, is it night with you yet?
  We, for our part, we forget
What night was, if it were.
The loud red mouth of the fight
  Are silent and shut where we are.
In our eyes the tempestuous air
  Shines as the face of a star.

14.

England, what of the night?—
  Night is for slumber and sleep,
  Warm, no season to weep.
Let me alone till the day.
Sleep would I still if I might,
  Who have slept for two hundred years.
Once I had honor, they say;
  But slumber is sweeter than tears.

15.

France, what of the night?—
  Night is the prostitute's noon,
  Kissed and drugged till she swoon,
Spat upon, trod upon, whored.
With bloodred rose-garlands dight,
  Round me reels in the dance
Death, my saviour, my lord,
  Crowned; there is no more France.

16.

Italy, what of the night?—
  Ah, child, child, it is long!
  Moonbeam and starbeam and song
Leave it dumb now and dark.
Yet I perceive on the height
  Eastward, not now very far,
A song too loud for the lark,
  A light too strong for a star.

17.

Germany, what of the night?—
  Long has it lulled me with dreams;
  Now at midwatch, as it seems,
Light is brought back to mine eyes,
And the mastery of old and the might
  Lives in the joints of mine hands,
Steadies my limbs as they rise,
  Strengthens my foot as it stands.

18.

Europe, what of the night?—
  Ask of heaven, and the sea
  And my babes on the bosom of me,
Nations of mine, but ungrown.
There is one who shall surely requite
  All that endure or that err:
She can answer alone:
  Ask not of me, but of her.

19.

Liberty, what of the night?—
  I feel not the red rains fall,
  Hear not the tempest at all,
Nor thunder in heaven any more.
All the distance is white
  With the soundless feet of the sun.
Night, with the woes that it wore,
  Night is over and done.

SUPER FLUMINA BABYLONIS.

By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept,
  Remembering thee,
That for ages of agony hast endured, and slept,
  And wouldst not see.

By the waters of Babylon we stood up and sang,
  Considering thee,
That a blast of deliverance in the darkness rang,
  To set thee free.

And with trumpets and thunderings and with morning song
  Came up the light;
And thy spirit uplifted thee to forget thy wrong
  As day doth night.

And thy sons were dejected not any more, as then
  When thou wast shamed;
When thy lovers went heavily without heart, as men
  Whose life was maimed.

In the desolate distances, with a great desire,
For thy love's sake,
With our hearts going back to thee, they were filled with fire,
Were nigh to break.

It was said to us: "Verily ye are great of heart,
But ye shall bend;
Ye are bondsmen and bondswomen, to be scourged and smart,
To toil and tend."

And with harrows men harrowed us, and subdued with spears,
And crushed with shame;
And the summer and winter was, and the length of years,
And no change came.

By the rivers of Italy, by the sacred streams,
By town, by tower,
There was feasting with revelling, there was sleep with dreams,
Until thine hour.

And they slept and they rioted on their rose-hung beds,
With mouths on flame,
And with love-locks vine-chapleted, and with rose-crowned heads
And robes of shame.

And they knew not their forefathers, nor the hills and streams
And words of power,
Nor the gods that were good to them, but with songs and dreams
Filled up their hour.

By the rivers of Italy, by the dry streams' beds,
When thy time came,
There was casting of crowns from them, from their young men's heads,
The crowns of shame.

By the horn of Eridanus, by the Tiber mouth,
As thy day rose,
They arose up and girded them to the north and south,
By seas, by snows.

As a water in January the frost confines,
Thy kings bound thee;
As a water in April is, in the new-blown vines,
Thy sons made free.

And thy lovers that looked for thee, and that mourned from far,
For thy sake dead,
We rejoiced in the light of thee, in the signal star
Above thine head.

In thy grief had we followed thee, in thy passion loved,
Loved in thy loss;
In thy shame we stood fast to thee, with thy pangs were moved,
Clung to thy cross.

By the hillside of Calvary we beheld thy blood,
Thy bloodred tears,
As a mother's in bitterness, an unebbing flood,
Years upon years.

And the north was Gethsemane, without leaf or bloom,
A garden sealed;
And the south was Aceldama, for a sanguine fume
Hid all the field.

By the stone of the sepulchre we returned to weep,
From far, from prison;
And the guards by it keeping it we beheld asleep,
But thou wast risen.

And an angel's similitude by the unsealed grave,
And by the stone:
And the voice was angelical, to whose words God gave
Strength like his own.

"Lo, the graveclothes of Italy that are folded up
In the grave's gloom!
And the guards as men wrought upon with charmed cup,
By the open tomb

"And her body most beautiful, and her shining head,
These are not here;
For your mother, for Italy, is not surely dead:
Have ye no fear.

"As of old time she spake to you, and you hardly heard,
Hardly took heed,
So now also she saith to you, yet another word,
Who is risen indeed.

"By my saying she saith to you, in your ears she saith,
Who hear these things,
Put no trust in men's royalties, nor in great men's breath,
Nor words of kings.

"For the life of them vanishes and is no more seen,
Nor no more known;
Nor shall any remember him if a crown hath been,
Or where a throne.

"Unto each man his handiwork, unto each his crown,
The just Fate gives;
Whoso takes the world's life on him and his own lays down,
He, dying so, lives.

"Whoso bears the whole heaviness of the wronged world's weight
And puts it by,
It is well with him suffering, though he face man's fate;
How should he die?

"Seeing death has no part in him any more, no power
Upon his head;
He has bought his eternity with a little hour,
And is not dead.

"For an hour, if ye look for him, he is no more found,
For one hour's space;
Then ye lift up your eyes to him and behold him crowned,
A deathless face.

"On the mountains of memory, by the world's well-springs,
In all men's eyes,
Where the light of the life of him is on all past things,
Death only dies.

"Not the light that was quenched for us, nor the deeds that were,
Nor the ancient days,
Nor the sorrows not sorrowful, nor the face most fair
Of perfect praise."

So the angel of Italy's resurrection said,
So yet he saith;
So the son of her suffering, that from breasts nigh dead
Drew life, not death.

That the pavement of Golgotha should be white as snow,
Not red, but white;
That the waters of Babylon should no longer flow,
And men see light.

THE HALT BEFORE ROME.

SEPTEMBER. 1867.

Is it so, that the sword is broken,
Our sword, that was halfway drawn?
Is it so, that the light was a spark,
That the bird we hailed as the lark
Sang in her sleep in the dark,
And the song we took for a token
Bore false witness of dawn?

Spread in the sight of the lion,
Surely, we said, is the net
Spread but in vain, and the snare
Vain; for the light is aware,
And the common, the chainless air,
Of his coming whom all we cry on;
Surely in vain is it set

Surely the day is on our side,
And heaven, and the sacred sun ;
Surely the stars, and the bright
Immemorial inscrutable night :
Yea, the darkness, because of our light,
Is no darkness, but blooms as a bower-side
When the winter is over and done ;

Blooms underfoot with young grasses
Green, and with leaves overhead,
Windflowers white, and the low
New-dropped blossoms of snow ;
And or ever the May winds blow,
And or ever the March wind passes,
Flames with anemones red.

We are here in the world's bower-garden,
We that have watched out the snow.
Surely the fruitfuller showers,
The splendider sunbeams are ours ;
Shall winter return on the flowers,
And the frost after April harden,
And the fountains in May not flow?

We have in our hands the shining
And the fire in our hearts of a star.
Who are we that our tongues should palter,
Hearts bow down, hands falter,
Who are clothed as with flame from the altar,
That the kings of the earth, repining,
Far off, watch from afar ?

Woe is ours if we doubt or dissemble,
Woe, if our hearts not abide.
Are our chiefs not among us, we said,
Great chiefs, living and dead,
To lead us glad to be led?
For whose sake, if a men of us tremble
He shall not be on our side.

What matter if these lands tarry,
That tarried (we said) not of old?
France, made drunken by fate,
England, that bore up the weight
Once of men's freedom, a freight
Holy, but heavy to carry
For hands overflowing with gold.

Though this be lame, and the other
Fleet, but blind from the sun,
And the race be no more to these,
Alas ! nor the palm to seize,
Who are weary and hungry of ease,
Yet, O Freedom, we said, O our mother,
Is there not left to thee one ?

Is there not left of thy daughters,
Is there not one to thine hand ?
Fairer than these, and of fame
Higher from of old by her name ;
Washed in her tears, and in flame
Bathed as in baptism of waters,
Unto all men a chosen land.

Her hope in her heart was broken,
Fire was upon her, and clomb,
Hiding her, high as her head ;
And the world went past her and said
(We heard it say) she was dead ;
And now, behold, she hath spoken,
She that was dead, saying, "Rome."

O mother of all men's nations,
Thou knowest if the deaf world heard !
Heard not now to her lowest
Depths, where the strong blood slowest
Beats at her bosom, thou knowest,
In her toils, in her dim tribulations,
Rejoiced not, hearing the word.

The sorrowful, bound unto sorrow,
The woe-worn people, and all
That of old were discomforted,
And men that famish for bread,
And men that mourn for their dead,
She bade them be glad on the morrow,
Who endured in the day of her thrall.

The blind, and the people in prison,
Souls without hope, without home,
How glad were they all that heard !
When the winged white flame of the word
Passed over men's dust, and stirred
Death ; for Italia was risen,
And risen her light upon Rome.

The light of her sword in the gateway
Shone, an unquenchable flame,
Bloodless, a sword to release,
A light from the eyes of peace,
To bid grief utterly cease,
And the wrong of the old world straightway
Pass from the face of her fame :

Hers, whom we turn to and cry on,
Italy, mother of men :
From the light of the face of her glory,
At the sound of the storm of her story,
That the sanguine shadows and hoary
Should flee from the foot of the lion,
Lion-like, forth of his den.

As the answering of thunder to thunder
Is the storm-beaten sound of her past;
As the calling of sea unto sea
Is the noise of her years yet to be;
For this ye knew not is she,
Whose bonds are broken in sunder;
This is she at the last.

So spake we aloud, high-minded,
Full of our will; and behold,
The speech that was halfway spoken
Breaks, as a pledge that is broken,
As a king's pledge, leaving in token
Grief only for high hopes blinded,
New grief grafted on old.

We halt by the walls of the city,
Within sound of the clash of her chain.
Hearing, we know that in there
The lioness chafes in her lair,
Shakes the storm of her hair,
Struggles in hands without pity,
Roars to the lion in vain.

Whose hand is stretched forth upon her?
Whose curb is white with her foam?
Clothed with the cloud of his deeds,
Swathed in the shroud of his creeds,
Who is this that has trapped her and leads,
Who turns to despair and dishonor
Her name, her name that was Rome?

Over fields without harvest or culture,
Over hords without honor or love,
Over nations that groan with their kings,
As an imminent pestilence flings
Swift death from her shadowing wings,
So he, who hath claws as a vulture,
Plumage and beak as a dove.

He saith, "I am pilot and haven,
Light and redemption I am
Unto souls overlabored," he saith;
And to all men the blast of his breath
Is a savour of death unto death;
And the Dove of his worship a raven,
And a wolf-cub the life-giving Lamb.

He calls his sheep as a shepherd,
Calls from the wilderness home,
"Come unto me and be fed,"
To feed them with ashes for bread
And grass from the graves of the dead,
Leaps on the fold as a leopard,
Slays, and says, "I am Rome."

Rome, having rent her in sunder,
With the clasp of an adder he clasps;
Swift to shed blood are his feet,
And his lips, that have man for their meat,
Smoother than oil, and more sweet
Than honey, but hidden thereunder
Festers the poison of asps.

As swords are his tender mercies,
His kisses as mortal stings:
Under his hallowing hands
Life dies down in all lands
Kings pray to him, prone where he stands,
And his blessings, as other men's curses,
Disanoint where they consecrate kings.

With an oil of unclean consecration,
With effusion of blood and of tears,
With uplifting of cross and of keys,
Priest, though thou hallow us these,
Yet even as they cling to thy knees
Nation awakens by nation,
King by king disappears.

How shall the spirit be loyal
To the shell of a spiritless thing?
Erred once, in only a word,
The sweet great song that we heard
Poured upon Tuscany, erred,
Calling a crowned man royal
That was no more than a king.

Sea-eagle of English feather,
A song-bird beautiful-souled,
She knew not them that she sang;
The golden trumpet that rang
From Florence, in vain for them, sprang
As a note in the nightingales' weather
Far over Fiesole rolled.

She saw not—happy, not seeing—
Saw not as we with her eyes
Aspromonte; she felt
Never the heart in her melt
As in us when the news was dealt
Melted all hope out of being,
Dropped all dawn from the skies.

In that weary funeral season,
In that heart-stricken grief-ridden time,
The weight of a king and the worth,
With anger and sorrowful mirth,
We weighed in the balance of earth,
And light was his word as a treason,
And heavy his crown as a crime.

Banners of kings shall ye follow
None, and have thrones on your side
None; ye shall gather and grow
Silently, row upon row,
Chosen of Freedom to go
Gladly where darkness may swallow,
Gladly where death may divide.

Have we not men with us royal,
Men the masters of things?
In the days when our life is made new,
All souls perfect and true
Shall adore whom their forefathers slew;
And these indeed shall be loyal,
And those indeed shall be kings.

Yet for a space they abide with us,
Yet for a little they stand,
Bearing the heat of the day.
When their presence is taken away,
We shall wonder and worship, and say,
"Was not a star on our side with us?
Was not a God at our hand?"

These, O men, shall ye honor,
Liberty only, and these.
For thy sake and for all men's and mine,
Brother, the crowns of them shine
Lighting the way to her shrine,
That our eyes may be fastened upon her,
That our hands may encompass her knees.

In this day is the sign of her shown to you;
Choose ye, to live or to die.
Now is her harvest in hand;
Now is her light in the land;
Choose ye, to sink or to stand,
For the might of her strength is made known to you
Now, and her arm is on high.

Serve not for any man's wages,
Pleasure nor glory nor gold;
Not by her side are they won
Who saith unto each of you, "Son,
Silver and gold have I none;
I give but the love of all ages,
And the life of my people of old."

Fear not for any man's terrors;
Wait not for any man's word;
Patiently, each in his place,
Gird up your loins to the race;
Following the print of her pace,
Purged of desires and of errors.
March to the tune ye have heard.

March to the tune of the voice of her,
Breathing the balm of her breath,
Loving the light of her skies.
Blessed is he on whose eyes
Dawns but her light as he dies;
Blessed are ye that make choice of her,
Equal to life and to death.

Ye that when faith is nigh frozen,
Ye that when hope is nigh gone,
Still, over wastes, over waves,
Still, among wrecks, among graves,
Follow the splendor that saves,
Happy, her children, her chosen,
Loyally led of her on.

The sheep of the priests, and the cattle
That feed in the penfolds of kings,
Sleek is their flock and well-fed;
Hardly she giveth you bread,
Hardly a rest for the head,
Till the day of the blast of the battle
And the storm of the wind of her wings.

Ye that have joy in your living,
Ye that are careful to live,
You her thunders go by:
Live, let men be, let them lie,
Serve your season, and die;
Gifts have your masters for giving,
Gifts hath not Freedom to give;

She, without shelter or station,
She, beyond limit or bar,
Urges to slumberless speed
Armies that famish, that bleed,
Sowing their lives for her seed,
That their dust may rebuild her a nation,
That their souls may relight her a star.

Happy are all they that follow her;
Them shall no trouble cast down;
Though she slay them, yet shall they trust in her,
For unsure there is nought nor unjust in her,
Blemish is none, neither rust in her;
Though it threaten, the night shall not swallow her,
Tempest and storm shall not drown.

Hither, O strangers, that cry for her,
Holding your lives in your hands,
Hither, for here is your light,
Where Italy is, and her might;
Strength shall be given you to fight,
Grace shall be given you to die for her,
For the flower, for the lady of lands;

Turn ye, whose anguish oppressing you
Crushes, asleep and awake,
For the wrong which is wrought as of yore;
That Italia may give of her store,
Having these things to give and no more;
Only her hands on you, blessing you;
Only a pang for her sake;
Only her bosom to die on;
Only her heart for a home,
And a name with her children to be
From Calabrian to Adrian sea
Famous in cities made free
That ring to the roar of the lion
Proclaiming republican Rome.

MENTANA: FIRST ANNIVERSARY.

At the time when the stars are grey,
And the gold of the molten moon
Fades, and the twilight is thinned,
And the sun leaps up, and the wind,
Alight rose, not of the day,
A stronger light than of noon.

As the light of a face much loved
Was the face [illegible] the light that clomb
As a mother whitened with woes
Her adorable [illegible] ha[illegible] arose;
As the sound of a [illegible] hat is moved,
Her voice went fo[illegible]h upon Rome.

At her lips it fluttered and failed
Twice, and sobbed [illegible] to song,
And sank as a flame sinks under;
Then spake, and the speech was thunder,
And the cheek as he heard it paled
Of the wrongdoer grown grey with the wrong.

"Is it time, is it time appointed,
Angel of time, is it near?
For the spent night aches into day
When the kings shall slay not or pray,
And the high-priest, accursed and anointed,
Sickens to deathward with fear.

"[illegible]or the bones of my slain are stirred,
And the seed of my earth in her womb
Moves as the heart of a bud
Beating with odorous blood
T[illegible] the tune of the loud first bird
B[illegible]ns and yearns into bloom.

"I lay my hand on her bosom,
My hand on the heart of my earth,
And I feel as with shiver and sob
The triumphant heart in her throb,
The dead petals dilate into blossom,
The divine blood beat into birth.

"O my earth, are the springs in thee dry?
O sweet, is thy body a tomb?
Nay, springs out of springs derive,
And summers from summers alive,
And the living from them that die;
No tomb is here, but a womb.

"O manifold womb and divine,
Give me fruit of my children, give!
I have given thee my dew for thy root,
Give thou me for my mouth of thy fruit;
Thine are the dead that are mine,
And mine are thy sons that live.

"O goodly children, O strong
Italian spirits, that wear
Could time or the world misdoubt you,
My glories as garments about you,
Behold, in disproof of the wron[illegible],
The field of the grave-pits there.

"And ye that fell upon sleep,
We have you too with us yet.
Fairer than life or than youth
Is this, to die for the truth:
No death can sink you so deep
As their graves whom their brethren forget.

"Were not your pains as my pains?
As my name are your names not divine?
Was not the light in your eyes
Mine, the light of my skies,
And the sweet shed blood of your veins,
O my beautiful martyrs, mine?

"Of mine earth were your dear limbs made,
Of mine air was your sweet life's breath:
At the breasts of my love ye were fed,
O my children, my chosen, my dead,
At my breasts where again ye are laid,
At the old mother's bosom, in death.

"But ye that live. O their brothers,
Be ye to me as they were ;
Give me, my children that live,
What these dead grudged not to give,
Who alive were son's of your mother's,
Whose lips drew breath of your air.

"Till darkness by dawn be cloven,
Let youth's self mourn and abstain ;
And love's self find not an hour,
And spring's self wear not a flower,
And Lycoris, with hair unenwoven,
Hail back to the banquet in vain.

"So sooner and surer the glory
That is not with us shall be,
And stronger the hands that smite
The heads of the sons of night,
And the sound throughout earth of our story
Give all men heart to be free."

BLESSED AMONG WOMEN.

TO THE SIGNORA CAIROLI.

1.

Blessed was she that bare,
Hidden in flesh most fair,
For all men s sake the likeness of all love ;
Holy that virgin's womb,
The old record saith, on whom
The glory of God alighted as a dove ;
Blessed, who brought to gracious birth
The sweet-souled Saviour of a man-tormented earth.

2.

But four times art thou blest,
At whose most holy breast
Four times a godlike soldier-saviour hung ;
And thence a fourfold Christ
Given to be sacrificed
To the same cross as the same bosom clung;
Poured the same blood, to leave the same
Light on the many-folded mountain-skirts of fame.

3.

Shall they and thou not live,
The children thou didst give
Forth of thine hands, a godlike gift, to death,
Through fire of death to pass
For her high sake that was
Thine and their mother, that gave all you breath ?
Shall ye not live till time drop dead,
O mother, and each her children's consecrated head ?

4.

Many brought gifts to take
For her love's supreme sake,
Life and life's love, pleasure and praise and rest,
And went forth bare ; but thou,
So much once richer, and now
Poorer than all these, more than these be blest ;
Poorer so much, by so much given,
Than who gives earth for heaven's sake, not for earth's sake heaven.

5.

Somewhat could each soul save,
What thing soever it gave,
But thine, mother, what has thy soul kept back ?
None of thine all, not one,
To serve thee and be thy son,
Feed with love all thy days, lest one day lack ;
All thy whole life's love, thine heart's whole,
Thou hast given as who gives gladly, O thou the supreme soul.

6.

The heart's pure flesh and blood,
The heaven thy motherhood,
The live lips, the live eyes, that lived on thee ;
The hands that clove with sweet
Blind clutch to thine, the feet
That felt on earth their first way to thy knee ;

The little laughter of mouths milk-fed,
Now open again to feed on dust among the dead;

7.

The fair, strong, yonng men's strength,
Light of life-days and length,
And glory of earth seen under and stars above,
And years that bring to tame
Now the wild falcon fame,
Now, to stroke smooth, the dove-white breast of love;
The life unlived, the unsown seeds,
Suns unbeholden, sons unsung, and undone deeds.

8.

Therefore shall man's love be
As an own son to thee,
And the world's worship of thee for a child;
All thine own land as one
New-born, a nursing son,
All thine own people a new birth undefiled;
And all the unborn Italian time,
And all its glory, and all its works, thy sèed sublime.

9.

That henceforth no man's breath,
Saying "Italy," but saith
In that Most sovereign word thine equal name;
Nor can one speak of thee
But he saith "Italy,"
Seeing in two sons one co-eternal flame;
One heat, one heaven, one heart, one fire,
One light, one love, one benediction, one desire.

10.

Blest above praise and prayer
And incense of men's air,
Thy place is higher than where such voices rise
As in men's temples make
Music for some vain sake,
This God's or that God's, in one weary wise;
Thee the soul silent, the shut heart,
The locked lips of the spirit praise thee that thou art.

I.

Yea, for man's whole life's length,
And with man s whole soul's strength,
We praise thee, O holy, and bless thee, O mother of lights;
And send forth as on wings
The world s heart's thanksgiving
Song-birds to sing thy days through and thy nights;
And wrap thee around and arch thee above
With the air of benediction and the heaven of love.

12.

And toward thee our unbreathed words
Fly speechless, winged as birds,
As the Indian flock, children of Paradise,
The winged things without feet,
Fed with God's dew for meat,
That live in the air and light of the utter skies;
So fleet, so flying a footless flight,
With wings for fleet love seeks thee, to partake thy sight.

13.

Love like a clear sky spread
Bends over thy loved head,
As a new heaven bends over a new-born earth,
When the old night's womb is great
With young stars passionate
And fair new planets fiery-fresh from birth;
And moon-white here, there hot like Mars,
Souls that are worlds shine on thee, spirits that are stars.

14.

Till the whole sky burns through
With heaven s own heart-deep hue,
With psssion-colored glories of lit souls;
And thine above all names
Writ highest with lettering flames
Lightens, and all the old starriest auroles
And all the old holiest memories wane.

And the old names of love's chosen, found
in thy sight vain.

15.

And crowned heads are discrowned,
And stars sink without sound,
And love's self for thy love's sake waxes
pale ;
Seeing from his storied skies
In what new reverent wise
Thee Rome's most highest, her sovereign
daughters, hail ;
Thee Portia, thee Veturia grey,
Thee Arria, thee Cornelia, Roman more
than they.

16.

Even all these as all we
Subdue themselves to thee,
Bow their heads haloed, quench their fiery
fame ;
Seen through dim years divine,
Their faint lights feminine
Sink, then spring up rekindled from thy
flame ;
Fade, then reflower and reillume
From thy fresh spring their wintering age
with new-blown bloom.

17.

To thy much holier head
Even theirs, the holy and dead,
Bow themselves each one from her heaven-
ward height ;
Each in her shining turn,
All tremble toward thee and yearn
To melt in thine their consummated light ;
Till from day's Capitolian dome
One glory of many glories lighten upon
Rome.

18.

Hush thyself, song, and cease,
Close, lips, and hold your peace;
What help hast thou, what part have ye
herein?
But you, with sweet shut eyes,
Heart-hidden memories,
Dreams and dumb thoughts that keep
what things have been
Silent, and pure of all words said,
Praise without song the living, without dirge
the dead.

19.

Thou, strengthless in these things,
Song, fold thy feebler wings,
And as a pilgrim go forth girt and shod
And where the new graves are,
And where the sunset star,
To the pure spirit of man that men call God,
To the high soul of things, that is
Made of men's heavenlier hopes and might-
ier memories ;

20.

To the elements that make
For the soul's living sake
This raiment of dead things, of shadow and
trance,
That give us chance and time
Wherein to aspire and climb
And set our life's work higher than time or
chance ;
The old sacred elements, that give
The breath of life to days that die, to deeds
that live ;

21.

To them, veiled gods and great,
There bow thee and dedicate
The speechless spirit in these thy weak words
hidden ;
And mix thy reverent breath
With holier air of death,
At the high feast of sorrow a guest unbidden,
Till with divine triumphal tears
Thou fill men's eyes who listen with a
heart that hears.

THE LITANY OF NATIONS.

μᾶ Γᾶ, μᾶ Γᾶ, βοὰν
φοβερὸν ἀπότρεπε.

ÆSCH. *Supp* 890.

CHORUS.

If with voice of words or prayers thy sons may reach thee,
We thy latter sons, the men thine after-birth,
We the children of thy grey-grown age, O Earth,
O our mother everlasting, we beseech thee,
By the sealed and secret ages of thy life ;
By the darkness wherein grew thy sacred forces ;
By the songs of stars thy sisters in their courses ;
By thine own song hoarse and hollow and shrill with strife ;
By thy voice distuned and marred of modulation ;
By thy discord of thy measures march with theirs ;
By the beauties of thy bosom, and the cares ;
By thy glory of growth, and the splendor of thy station ;
By the shame of men thy children, and the pride ;
By the pale-cheeked hope that sleeps and weeps and passes,
As the grey dew from the morning mountain-grasses ;
By the white-lipped sightless memories that abide ;
By the silence and the sound of many sorrows ;
By the joys that leapt up living and fell dead ;
By the veil that hides thy hands and breasts and head,
Wrought of divers colored days and nights and morrows ;
Isis, thou that knowest of God what worlds are worth,
Thou the ghost of God, the mother uncreated,
Soul for whom the floating forceless ages waited
As our forceless fancies wait on thee, O Earth ;
Thou the body and soul, the father-God and mother,
If at all it move thee, knowing of all things done
Here where evil things and good things are not one,
But their faces are as fire against each other;
By thy morning and thine evening, night and day ;
By the first white light that stirs and strives and hovers
As a bird above the brood her bosom covers,
By the sweet last star that takes the westward way ;
By the night whose feet are shod with snow or thunder,
Fledged with plumes of storm, or soundless as the dew ;
By the vesture bound of many-folded blue
Round her breathless breasts, and all the woven wonder ;
By the golden-growing eastern stream of sea ;
By the sounds of sunrise moving in the mountains ;
By the forces of the floods and unsealed fountains ;
Thou that badest man be born, bid man be free.

GREECE.

I am she that made thee lovely with my beauty
From north to south ;
Mine, the fairest lips, took first the fire of duty
From thine own mouth

Mine, the fairest eyes sought first thy laws
and knew them
Truths undefiled ;
Mine, the fairest hands, took freedom first
into them,
A weanling child.
By my light, now he lies sleeping, seen
above him
Where none sees other :
By my dead that loved and living men that
love him ;
(*Cho.*) Hear us, O mother.

ITALY.

I am she that was the light of thee en-
kindled
When Greece grew dim ;
She whose life grew up with man's free life,
and dwindled
With wane of him
She that once by sword and once by word
imperial
Struck bright thy gloom ;
And a third time, casting off these years
funeral,
Shall burst thy tomb.
By that bond 'twixt thee and me whereat
affrighted
Thy tyrants fear us ;
By that hope and this remembrance re-
united :
(*Cho.*) O mother, hear us.

SPAIN.

I am she that set my seal upon the name-
less
West worlds of seas ;
And my sons as brides took unto them the
tameless
Hesperides.
Till my sins and sons through sinless lands
dispersèd,
With red flame shod,
Made accurst the name of man, and thrice
accursèd
The name of God.
Lest for those past fires the fires of my re-
pentance
Hell's fume yet smother,
Now my blood would buy remission of my
sentence ;
(*Cho.*) Hear us, O mother.

FRANCE.

I am she that was thy sign and standard-
bearer,
Thy voice and cry ;
She that washed thee with her blood and
left thee fairer,
The same was I.
Were not these the hands that raised thee
fallen and fed thee,
These hands defiled ?
Was not I thy tongue that spake, thine eye
that led thee,
Not I thy child ?
By the darkness on our dreams, and the
dead errors
Of dead times near us ;
By the hopes that hang around thee, and
the terrors ;
(*Cho.*) O mother, hear us.

RUSSIA.

I am she whose hands are strong and her
eyes blinded
And lips athirst
Till upon the night of nations many-minded
One bright day burst :
Till the myriad stars be molten into one
light,
And that light thine ;
Till the soul of man be parcel of the sun-
light,
And thine of mine.
By the snows that blanch not him nor
cleanse from slaughter
Who slays his brother ;
By the stains and by the chains on me thy
daughter ;
(*Cho.*) Hear us, O mother

SWITZERLAND.

I am she that shews on mighty limbs and
maiden
Nor chain nor stain ;
For what blood can touch these hands with
gold unladen,
These feet what chain ?
By the surf of spears one shieldless bosom
breasted
And was my shield,
Till the plume-plucked Austrian vulture-
heads twin crested
Twice drenched the field ;

By the snows and souls untrampled and untroubled
That shine to cheer us,
Light of those to these responsive and redoubled ;
(Cho.) O mother, hear us.

GERMANY.

I am she beside whose forest-hidden fountains
Slept freedom armed,
By the magic born to music in my mountains
Heart-chained and charmed.
By those days the very dream whereof delivers
My soul from wrong ;
By the sounds that make of all my ringing rivers
None knows what song ;
By the many tribes and names of my division
One from another ;
By the single eye of sun-compelling vision ;
(Cho.) Hear us, O mother.

ENGLAND.

I am she that was and was not of thy chosen,
Free, and not free ;
She that fed thy springs, till now her springs are frozen ;
Yet I am she.
By the sea that clothed and sun that saw me splendid
And fame that crowned.
By the song-fires and the sword-fires mixed and blended
That robed me round ;
By the star that Milton's soul for Shelley's lighted,
Whose rays insphere us ;
By the beacon-bright Republic far-off sighted ;
(Cho.) O mother, hear us.

CHORUS.

Turn away from us the cross-blown blasts of error,
That drown each other ;
Turn away the fearful cry, the loud tongued terror,
O Earth, O mother.

Turn away their eyes who track, their hearts who follow,
The pathless past ;
Shew the soul of man, as summer shows the swallow,
The way at last.
By the sloth of men that all too long endure men
On man to tread ;
By the cry of men, the bitter cry of poor men
That faint for bread ;
By the blood-sweat of the people in the garden
Inwalled of kings ;
By his passion interceding for their pardon
Who do these things ;
By the sightless souls and fleshless limbs that labor
For not their fruit ;
By the foodless mouth with foodless heart for neighbor,
That, mad, is mute ;
By the child that famine eats as worms the blossom
—Ah God, the child !
By the milkless lips that strain the bloodless bosom
Till woe runs wild ;
By the pastures that give grass to feed the lamb in,
Where men lack meat ;
By the cities clad with gold and shame and famine ;
By field and street ;
By the people, by the poor man, by the master
That men call slave ;
By the cross-winds of defeat and of disaster,
By wreck by wave ;
By the helm that keeps us still to sunwards driving,
Still eastward bound,
Till, as night-watch ends, day burn on eyes reviving,
And land be found :
We thy children, that arraign not nor impeach thee
Though no star steer us,
By the waves that wash the morning we beseech thee,
O mother, hear us,

HERTHA.

I AM that which began ;
Out of me the years roll ;
Out of me God and man ;
I am equal and Whole ;
God changes, and man, and the form of them bodily ; I am the soul.

Before ever land was,
Before ever the sea,
Or soft hair of the grass,
Or fair limbs of the tree,
Or the flesh-colored fruit of my branches, I was, and thy soul was in me.

First life on my sources
First drifted and swam ;
Out of me are the forces
That save it or damn ;
Out of me man and woman, and wild-beast and bird ; before God was, I am.

Beside or above me
Nought is there to go ;
Love or unlove me,
Unknow me or know,
I am that which unloves me and loves ; I am stricken, and I am the blow.

I the mark that is missed
And the arrows that miss,
I the mouth that is kissed
And the breath in the kiss,
The search, and the sought, and the seeker, the soul and the body that is.

I am that thing which blesses
My spirit elate ;
That which caresses
With hands uncreate
My limbs unbegotten that measure the length of the measure of fate.

But what thing dost thou now,
Looking Godward, to cry
"I am I, thou art thou,
I am low, thou art high ?"
I am thou, whom thou seekest to find him ; find thou but thyself, thou art I.

I the grain and the furrow,
The plough-cloven clod
And the ploughshare drawn thorough,
The germ and the sod,
The deed and the doer, the seed and the sower, the dust which is God.

Hast thou known how I fashioned thee,
Child, underground ?
Fire that impassioned thee,
Iron that bound,
Dim changes of water, what thing of all these hast thou known of or found ?

Canst thou say in thine heart
Thou has seen with thine eyes
With what cunning of art
Thou wast wrought in what wise,
By what force of what stuff thou wast shapen, and shown on my breast to the skies?

Who hath given, who hath sold it thee,
Knowledge of me ?
Hath the wilderness told it thee ?
Hast thou learnt of the sea ?
Hast thou communed in spirit with night ? have the winds taken counsel with thee?

Have I set such a star
To show light on thy brow
That thou sawest from afar
What I show to thee now ?
Have ye spoken as brethren together, the sun and the mountains and thou ?

What is here, dost thou know it ?
What was, hast thou known ?
Prophet nor poet
Nor tripod nor throne
Nor spirit nor flesh can make answer, but only thy mother alone.

Mother, not maker,
Born, and not made ;
Though her children forsake her,
Allured or afraid,
Praying prayers to the God of their fashion, she stirs not for all that have prayed.

A creed is a rod.
And a crown is of night;
But this thing is God,
To be man with thy might,
To grow straight in the strength of thy spirit, and live out thy life as the light.

I am in thee to save thee,
As my soul in thee saith,
Give thou as I gave thee,
Thy life-blood and breath,
Green leaves of thy labor, white flowers of thy thought, and red fruit of thy death.

Be the ways of thy giving
As mine were to thee;
The free life of thy living,
Be the gift of it free;
Not as servant to lord, nor as master to slave, shalt thou give thee to me.

O children of banishment,
Souls overcast,
Were the lights ye see vanish meant
Alway to last,
Ye would know not the sun overshining the shadows and stars overpast.

I that saw where ye trod
The dim paths of the night
Set the shadow called God
In your skies to give light;
But the morning of manhood is risen, and the shadowless soul is in sight.

The tree many-rooted
That swells to the sky
With frondage red-fruited,
The life-tree am I;
In the buds of your lives is the sap of my leaves: ye shall live and not die.

But the Gods of your fashion
That take and that give,
In their pity and passion
That scourge and forgive,
They are worms that are bred in the bark that falls off: they shall die and not live.

My own blood is what stanches
The wounds in my bark:
Stars caught in my branches
Make day of the dark,
And are worshipped as suns till the sunrise shall tread out their fires as a spark.

Where dead ages hide under
The live roots of the tree,
In my darkness the thunder
Make utterance of me;
In the clash of my boughs with each other ye hear the waves sound of the sea.

That noise is of Time,
As his feathers are spread
And his feet set to climb
Through the boughs overhead,
And my foliage rings round him and rustles, and branches are bent with his tread.

The storm-winds of ages
Blow through me and cease,
The war-wind that rages,
The spring-wind of peace,
Ere the breath of them roughen my tresses, ere one of my blossoms increase.

All sounds of all changes,
All shadows and lights
On the world's mountain-ranges
And stream-riven heights,
Whose tongue is the wind's tongue and language of storm-clouds on earth-shaking nights;

All forms of all faces,
All works of all hands
In unsearchable places
Of time-stricken lands,
All death and all life, and all reigns and all ruins, drop through me as sands.

Though sore be my burden
And more than ye know,
And my growth have no guerdon
But only to grow,
Yet I fail not of growing for lightnings above me or deathworms below.

These too have their part in me,
As I too in these;
Such fire is at heart in me,
Such sap is this tree's,
Which hath in it all sounds and all secrets of infinite lands and of seas.

In the spring-colored hours
When my mind was as May's,
There brake forth of me flowers
By centuries of days,
Strong blossoms with perfume of manhood, shot out from my spirit as rays.

And the sound of them springing
And smell of their shoots
Were as warmth and sweet singing
And strength to my roots;
And the lives of my children made perfect
with freedom of soul were my fruits.

I bid you but be;
I have need not of prayer;
I have need of you free
As your mouths of mine air;
That my heart may be greater within me,
beholding the fruits of me fair.

More fair than strange fruit is
Of faiths ye espouse;
In me only the root is
That blooms in your boughs;
Behold now your God that ye made you,
to feed him with faith of your vows.

In the darkening and whitening
Abysses adored,
With dayspring and lightning
For lamp and for sword,
God thunders in heaven, and his angels
are red with the wrath of the Lord.

O my sons, O too dutiful
Toward Gods not of me,
Was not I enough beautiful?
Was it hard to be free?
For behold, I am with you, am in you and
of you; look forth now and see.

Lo, winged with world's wonders,
With miracles shod,
With the fires of his thunders
For raiment and rod,
God trembles in heaven, and his angels are
white with the terror of God.

For his twilight is come on him,
His anguish is here;
And his spirits gaze dumb on him,
Grown grey from his fear;
And his hour taketh hold on him stricken,
the last of his infinite year.

Thought made him and breaks him,
Truth slays and forgives;
But to you, as time takes him,
This new thing it gives,
Even love, the beloved Republic, that feeds
upon freedom and lives.

For truth only is living,
Truth only is whole,
And the love of his giving
Man's polestar and pole;
Man, pulse of my centre, and fruit of my
body, and seed of my soul.

One birth of my bosom;
One beam of mine eye;
One topmost blossom
That scales the sky;
Man, equal and one with me, man that is
made of me, man that is I.

BEFORE A CRUCIFIX.

HERE, down between the dusty trees,
At this lank edge of haggard wood,
Women with labor-loosened knees,
With gaunt backs bowed by servitude,
Stop, shift their loads, and pray, and fare
Forth with souls easier for the prayer.

The suns have branded black, the rains
Striped grey this piteous God of theirs;
The face is full of prayers and pains,
To which they bring their pains and
prayers;
Lean limbs that shew the laboring bones,
And ghastly mouth that gapes and groans.

God of this grievous people, wrought
After the likeness of their race,
By faces like thine own besought,
Thine own blind helpless eyeless face,
I too, that have nor tongue nor knee
For prayer, I have a word to thee.

It was for this then, that thy speech
Was blown about the world in flame
And men's souls shot up out of reach
Of fear or lust or thwarting shame—
That thy faith over souls should pass
As sea-winds burning the grey grass?

It was for this, that prayers like these
  Should spend themselves about thy feet,
And with hard overlabored knees
  Kneeling, these slaves of men should beat
Bosoms too lean too suckle sons
And fruitless as their orisons?

It was for this, that men should make
  Thy name a fetter on men's necks,
Poor men's made poorer for thy sake,
  And women's withered out of sex?
It was for this, that slaves should be,
Thy word was passed to set men free?

The nineteenth wave of the ages rolls
  Now deathward since thy death and birth.
Hast thou fed full men's starved-out souls?
  Hast thou brought freedom upon earth?
Or are there less oppressions done
In this wild world under the sun?

Nay, if indeed thou be not dead,
  Before thy terrene shrine be shaken,
Look down, turn usward, bow thine head;
  O thou that wast of God forsaken,
Look on thine household here, and see
These that have not forsaken thee.

Thy faith is fire upon their lips,
  Thy kingdom golden in their hands;
They scourge us with thy words for whips,
  They brand us with thy words for brands;
The thrist that made thy dry throat shrink
To their moist mouths commends the drink.

The toothèd thorns that bit thy brows
  Lighten the weight of gold on theirs;
Thy nakedness enrobes thy spouse
  With the soft sanguine stuff she wears
Whose old limbs use for ointment yet
Thine agony and bloody sweat.

The blinding buffets on thine head
  On their crowned heads confirm the crown;
Thy scourging dyes their raiment red,
  And with thy bands they fasten down
For burial in the blood-bought field
The nations by thy stripes unhealed.

With iron for thy linen bands
  And unclean cloths for winding-sheet
They bind the people's nail-pierced hands,
  They hide the people's nail-pierced feet:
And what man or what angel known
Shall roll back the sepulchral stone?

But these have not the rich man's grave
  To sleep in when their pain is done.
These were not fit for God to save.
  As naked hell-fire is the sun
In their eyes living, and when dead
These have not where to lay their head.

They have no tomb to dig, and hide;
  Earth is not theirs, that they should sleep.
On all these tombless crucified
  No lovers' eyes have time to weep.
So still, for all man's tears and creeds,
The sacred body hangs and bleeds.

Through the left hand a nail is driven,
  Faith, and another through the right,
Forged in the fires of hell and heaven,
  Fear that puts out the eye of light:
And the feet soiled and scarred and pale
Are pierced with falsehood for a nail.

And priests against the mouth divine
  Push their sponge full of poison yet
And bitter blood for myrrh and wine,
  And on the same reed is it set
Wherewith before they buffeted
The people's disanointed head.

O sacred head, O desecrate,
  O labor-wounded feet and hands,
O blood poured forth in pledge to fate
  Of nameless lives in divers lands,
O slain and spent and sacrificed
People, the grey-grown speechless Christ!

Is there a gospel in the red
  Old witness of thy wide-mouthed wounds?
From thy blind stricken tongueless head
  What desolate evangel sounds
A hopeless note of hope deferred?
What word, if there be any word?

O son of man, beneath man's feet
  Cast down, O common face of man
Whereon all blows and buffets meet,
  O royal, O republican
Face of the people bruised and dumb
And longing till thy kingdom come!

The soldiers and the high priests part
  Thy vesture: all thy days are pierced,
And all the nights that eat thine heart.
  And that one seamless coat of Christ,
The freedom of the natural soul,
They cast their lots for to keep whole.

No fragment of it save the name
  They leave thee for a crown of scorns
Wherewith to mock thy naked shame
  And forehead bitten through with thorns
And, marked with sanguine sweat and tears,
The stripes of eighteen hundred years.

And we seek yet if God or man
  Can loosen thee as Lazarus,
Bid thee rise up republican
  And save thyself and all of us;
But no disciple's tongue can say
When thou shalt take our sins away.

And mouldering now and hoar with moss
  Between us and the sunlight swings
The phantom of a Christless cross
  Shadowing the sheltered heads of kings
And making with its moving shade
The souls of harmless men afraid.

It creaks and rocks to left and right,
  Consumed of rottenness and rust,
Worm-eaten of the worms of night,
  Dead as their spirits who put trust,
Round its base muttering as they sit,
In the time-cankered name of it.

Thou, in the day that breaks thy prison,
  People, though these men take thy name,
And hail and hymn thee rearisen,
  Who made songs erewhile of thy shame,
Give thou not ear; for these are they
Whose good day was thine evil day.

Set not thine hand unto their cross
  Give not thy soul up sacrificed.
Change not the gold of faith for dross
  Of Christian creeds that spit on Christ.
Let not thy tree of freedom be
Regrafted from that rotting tree.

This dead God here against my face
  Hath help for no man; who hath seen
The good works of it, or such grace
  As thy grace in it, Nazarene,
As that from thy live lips which ran
For man's sake, O thou son of man?

The tree of faith ingraffed by priests
  Puts its foul foliage out above thee,
And round it feed man-eating beasts
  Because of whom we dare not love thee;
Though hearts reach back and memories
    ache,
We cannot praise thee for their sake.

O hidden face of man, whereover
  The years have woven a viewless veil,
If thou wast verily man's lover,
  What did thy love or blood avail?
Thy blood the priests make poison of,
And in gold shekels coin thy love.

So when our souls looks back to thee
  They sicken, seeing against thy side,
Too foul to speak of or to see,
  The leprous likeness of a bride,
Whose kissing lips through his lips grown
Leave their God rotten to the bone.

When we would see thee man, and know
  What heart thou hadst toward men indeed,
Lo, thy blood-blackened altars; lo,
  The lips of priests that pray and feed
While their own hell's worm curls and licks
The poison of the crucifix.

Thou bad'st let children come to thee;
  What children now but curses come?
What man in that God can be
  Who sees their worship, and is dumb?
No soul that lived, loved, wrought, and
    died,
Is this their carrion crucified.

Nay, if their God and thou be one,
  If thou and this thing be the same,
Thou shouldst not look upon the sun:
  The sun grows haggard at thy name
Come down, be done with, cease, give o'er:
Hide thyself, strive not, be no more.

TENEBRÆ.

AT the chill high tide of the night.
At the turn of the fluctuant hours,
When the waters of time are at height,
In a vision arose on my sight
The kingdoms of earth and the powers.

In a dream without lightening of eyes
I saw them, children of earth,
Nations and races arise,
Each one after his wise,
Signed with the sign of his birth.

Sound was none of their feet,
Light was none of their faces;
In their lips breath was not, or heat,
But a subtle murmur and sweet
As of water in wan waste places.

Pale as from passionate years,
Years unassuaged of desire,
Sang they soft in mine ears,
Crowned with jewels of tears,
Girt with girdles of fire.

A slow song beaten and broken,
As it were from the dust and the dead,
As of spirits athirst unsloken,
As of things unspeakable spoken,
As of tears unendurable shed.

In the manifold sound remote,
In the molten murmur of song,
There was but a sharp sole note
Alive on the night and afloat,
The cry of the world's heart's wrong.

As the sea in the strait sea-caves,
The sound came straitened and strange;
A noise of the rending of graves,
A tidal thunder of waves,
The music of death and of change.

"We have waited so long," they say
"For a sound of the God, for a breath,
For a ripple of the refluence of day,
For the fresh bright wind of the fray,
For the light of the sunrise of death.

"We have prayed not, we, to be strong,
To fulfil the desire of our eyes;
—Howbeit they have watched for it long,
Watched, and the night did them wrong.
Yet they say not of day shall it rise?

"They are fearful and feeble with years,
Yet they doubt not of day if it be;
Yea, blinded and beaten with tears,
Yea, sick with foresight of fears,
Yet a little, and hardly, they see.

"We pray not, we, for the palm,
For the fruit ingraffed of the fight,
For the blossom of peace and the balm,
And the tender triumph and calm
Of crownless and weaponless right.

"We pray not, we, to behold
The latter august new birth,
The young day's purple and gold,
And divine, and rerisen as of old,
The sun-god of Freedom on earth.

"Peace, and world's honor, and fame,
We have sought after none of these things:
The light of a life like flame
Passing the storm of a name
Shaking the strongholds of kings:

"Nor, fashioned of fire and of air,
The splendor that burns on his head
Who was chiefest in ages that were,
Whose breath blew palaces bare,
Whose eye shone tyrannies dead;

"All these things in your day
Ye shall see, O our sons, and shall hold
Surely; but we, in the grey
Twilight, for one thing we pray,
In that day though our memories be cold:

"To feel on our brows as we wait
An air of the morning, a breath
From the springs of the east, from the gate
Whence freedom issues, and fate,
Sorrow and triumph, and death:

"From a land whereon time hath not trod
Where the spirit is bondless and bare,
And the world's rein breaks, and the rod,
And the soul of a man which is God,
He adores without altar or prayer:

"For alone of herself and her right
She takes, and alone gives grace:
And the colors of things lose light,
And the forms, in the limitless white
Splendor of space without space:

"And the blossom of man from his tomb
Yearns open, the flower that survives;
And the shadows of changes consume
In the colorless passionate bloom
Of the live light made of our lives:

"Seeing each life given is a leaf
Of the manifold multiform flower,
And the least among these, and the chief,
As an ear in the red ripe sheaf
Stored for the harvesting hour.

"O spirit of man, most holy,
The measure of things and the root;
In our summers and winters a lowly
Seed, putting forth of them slowly
Thy supreme blossom and fruit;

"In thy sacred and perfect year,
The souls that were parcel of thee
In the labor and life of us here
Shall be rays of thy sovereign sphere,
Springs of thy motion shall be.

"There is the fire that was man,
The light that was love, and the breath
That was hope ere deliverance began,
And the wind that was life for a span,
And the birth of new things which is death.

"There, whosoever had light,
And, having, for men's sake gave;
All that warred against night,
All that were found in the fight
Swift to be slain and to save;

"Undisbranched of the storms that disroot us
Of the lures that enthrall unenticed:
The names that exalt and transmute us:
The blood-bright splendour of Brutus,
The snow-bright splendor of Christ.

"There all chains are undone;
Day there seems but as night;
Spirit and sense are as one
In the light not of star nor of sun:
Liberty there is the light.

"She, sole mother and maker,
Stronger than sorrow, than strife:
Deathless, though death overtake her;
Faithful, though faith should forsake her;
Spirit, and saviour, and life."

HYMN OF MAN.

(During the Session in Rome of the Œcumenical Council.)

In the grey beginning of years, in the twilight of things that began,
The word of the earth in the ears of the world, was it God? was it man?
The word of the earth to the spheres her sisters, the note of her song,
The sound of her speech in the ears of the starry and sisterly throng,
Was it praise or passion or prayer, was it love or devotion or dread,
When the veils of the shining air first wrapt her jubilant head?
When her eyes new-born of the night saw yet no star out of reach;
When her maiden mouth was alight with the flame of musical speech;
When her virgin feet were set on the terrible heavenly way,
And her virginal lids were wet with the dew of the birth of the day:
Eyes that had looked not on time, and ears that had heard not of death;
Lips that had learnt not the rhyme of change and passionate breath,
The rhythmic anguish of growth, and the motion of mutable things,
Of love that longs and is loth, and plume-plucked hope without wings,
Passions and pains without number, and life that runs and is lame,
From slumber again to slumber, the same race set for the same,
Where the runners outwear each other, but running with lampless hands
No man takes light from his brother till blind at the goal he stands:
Ah, did they know, did they dream of it, counting the cost and the worth?
The ways of her days, did they seem then good to the new-souled earth?
Did her heart rejoice, and the might of her spirit in her then,
Child yet no child of the night, and motherless mother of men?

Was it Love brake forth flower-fashion, a bird with gold on his wings,
Lovely, her firstborn passion, and impulse of firstborn things?
Was Love that nestling indeed that under the plume of the night
Was hatched and hidden as seed in the furrow, and brought forth bright?
Was it Love lay shut in the shell world-shaped, having over him there
Black world-wide wings that impel the might of the night through air?
And bursting his shell as a bird, night shook through her sail-stretched vans,
And her heart as a water was stirred, and its heat was the firstborn man's
For the waste of the dead void air took form of a world at birth,
And the waters and firmaments were, and light, and the life-giving earth.
The beautiful bird unbegotten that night brought forth without pain
In the fathomless years forgotten whereover the dead gods reign,
Was it love, life, godhead, or fate? we say the spirit is one
That moved on the dark to create out of darkness the stars and the sun.
Before the growth was the grower, and the seed ere the plant was sown;
But what was seed of the sower? and the grain of him, whence was it grown?
Foot after foot ye go back and travail and make yourselves mad;
Blind feet that feel for the track where highway is none to be had.
Therefore the God that ye make you is grievous, and gives not aid,
Because it is but for your sake that the God of your making is made.
Thou and I and he are not gods made men for a span,
But God, if a God there be, is the substance of men which is man.
Our lives are as pulses or pores of his manifold body and breath;
As waves of his sea on the shores where birth is the beacon of death.
We men, the multiform features of man, whatsoever we be,
Recreate him of whom we are creatures, and all we only are he.
For each man of all men is God, but God is the fruit of the whole;
Indivisible spirit and blood, indiscernible body from soul.
Not men's but man's is the glory of godhead, the kingdom of time,
The mountainous ages made hoary with snows for the spirit to climb.
A God with the world inwound whose clay to his footsole clings;
A manifold God fast-bound as with iron of adverse things.
A soul that labours and lives, an emotion, a strenuous breath,
From the flame that its own mouth gives reillumed and refreshed with death.
In the sea whereof centuries are waves the live God plunges and swims;
His bed is in all men's graves, but the worm hath not hold on his limbs.
Night puts out not his eyes, nor time sheds change on his head;
With such fire as the stars of the skies are the roots of his heart are fed.
Men are the thoughts passing through it, the veins that fulfil it with blood,
With spirit of sense to renew it as springs fulfilling a flood.
Men are the heartbeats of man, the plumes that feather his wings,
Storm-worn, since being began, with the wind and thunder of things.
Things are cruel and blind; their strength detains and deforms:
And the wearying wings of the mind still beat up the stream of their storms.
Still, as one swimming up stream, they strike out blind in the blast,
In thunders of vision and dream, and lightning of future and past.
We are baffled and caught in the current and bruised upon edges of shoals;
As weeds or as reeds in the torrent of things are the wind-shaken souls.
Spirit by spirit goes under, a foam-bell's bubble of breath,
That blows and opens in sunder and blurs not the mirror of death.
For a worm or a thorn in his path is a man's soul quenched as a flame;
For his lust of an hour or his wrath shall the worm and the man be the same.
O God sore stricken of things! they have wrought him a raiment of pain;
Can a God shut eyelids and wings at a touch on the nerves of the brain?
O shamed and sorrowful God, whose force goes out at a blow!

What world shall shake at his nod? at his coming what wilderness glow?
What help in the work of his hands? what light in the track of his feet?
His days are snowflakes or sands, with cold to consume him and heat.
He is servant with Change for lord, and for wages he hath to his hire
Folly and force, and a sword that devours, and a ravening fire,
From the bed of his birth to his grave he is driven as a wind at their will;
Lest Change bow down as his slave, and the storm and the sword be still;
Lest earth spread open her wings to the sunward, and sing with the spheres;
Lest man be master of things, to prevail on their forces and fears.
By the spirit are things overcome; they are stark, and the spirit hath breath;
It hath speech, and their forces are dumb; it is living and things are of death.
But they know not the spirit for master they feel not force from above,
While man makes love to disaster, and woos desolation with love.
Yea, himself too hath made himself chains, and his own hands plucked out his eyes;
For his own soul only constrains him, his own mouth only denies.
The herds of kings and their hosts and the flocks of the high priests bow
To a master whose face is a ghost's; O thou that wast God, is it thou?
Thou madest man in the garden; thou temptedst man, and he fell;
Thou gavest him poison and pardon for blood and burnt-offering to sell.
Thou hast sealed thine elect to salvation, fast locked with faith for the key;
Make now for thyself expiation, and be thine atonement for thee.
Ah, thou that darkenest heaven—ah, thou that bringest a sword—
By the crimes of thine hands unforgiven they beseech thee to hear them, O Lord.
By the balefires of ages that burn for thine incense, by creed and by rood,
By the famine and passion that yearn and that hunger to find of thee food,
By the children that asked at thy throne of the priests that were fat with thine hire
For bread, and thou gavest a stone; for light, and thou madest them fire:
By the kiss of thy peace like a snake's kiss, that leaves the soul rotten at root;
By the savors of gibbets and stakes thou hast planted to bear to thee fruit;
By torture and terror and treason, that make to thee weapons and wings:
By thy power upon men for a season, made out of the malice of things;
O thou that hast built thee a shrine of the madness of man and his shame,
And hast hung in the midst for a sign of his worship the lamp of thy name;
That hast shown him for heaven in a vision a void world's shadow and shell,
And hast fed thy delight and derision with fire of belief as of hell;
That has fleshed on the souls that believe thee the fang of the death-worm fear,
With anguish of dreams to deceive them whose faith cries out in thine ear;
By the face of the spirit confounded before thee and humbled in dust,
By the dread wherewith life was astounded and shamed out of sense of its trust,
By the scourges of doubt and repentance that fell on the soul at thy nod,
Thou art judged, O judge, and the sentence is gone forth against thee, O God.
Thy slave that slept is awake; thy slave but slept for a span;
Yea, man thy slave shall unmake thee, who made thee lord over man.
For his face is set to the east, his feet on the past and its dead;
The sun rearisen is his priest, and the heat thereof hallows his head.
His eyes take part in the morning; his spirit outsounding the sea
Asks no more witness or warning from temple or tripod or tree.
He hath set the centuries at union; the night is afraid at his name;
Equal with life, in communion with death, he hath found them the same.
Past the wall unsurmounted that bars out our vision with iron and fire
He hath sent forth his soul for the stars to comply with and suns to conspire.
His thought takes flight for the centre wherethrough it hath part in the whole;
The abysses forbid it not enter: the stars make room for the soul.
Space is the soul's to inherit; the night is hers as the day;
Lo, saith man, this is my spirit; how shall not the worlds make way?

Space is thought's, and the wonders thereof, and the secret of space ;
Is thought not more than the thunders and lightnings ? shall thought give place ?
Is the body not more than the vesture, the life not more than the meat ?
The will than the word or the gesture, the heart than the hands or the feet ?
Is the tongue not more than the speech is ? the head not more than the crown ?
And if higher than is heaven be the reach of the soul, shall not heaven bow down?
Time, father of life, and more great than than the life it begat and began,
Earth's keeper and heaven's and their fate, lives, thinks, and hath substance in man.
Time's motion that throbs in his blood is the thought that gives heart to the skies,
And the springs of the fire that is food to the sunbeams are light to his eyes.
The minutes that beat with his heart are the words to which worlds keep chime,
And the thought in his pulses is part of the blood and the spirit of time.
He saith to the ages, Give ; and his soul foregoes not her share ;
Who are ye that forbid him to live, and would feed him with heavenlier air ?
Will ye feed him with poisonous dust, and restore him with hemlock for drink,
Till he yield you his soul up in trust, and have heart not to know or to think ?
He hath stirred him, and found out the flaw in his fetters, and cast them behind ;
His soul to his soul is a law, and his mind is a light to his mind.
The seal of his knowledge is sure, the truth and his spirit are wed ;
Men perish, but man shall endure ; lives die, but the life is not dead.
He hath sight of the secrets of season, the roots of the years and the fruits ;
His soul is at one with the reason of things that is sap to the roots.
He can hear in their changes a sound as the conscience of consonant spheres ;
He can see through the years flowing round him the law lying under the years.
Who are ye that would bind him with curses and blind him with vapor of prayer?
Your might is as night that disperses when light is alive in the air.
The bow of your godhead is broken, the arm of your conquest is stayed ;
Though ye call down God to bear token, for fear of you none is afraid.
Will ye turn back times, and the courses of stars, and the season of souls ?
Shall God's breath dry up the sources that feed time full as it rolls?
Nay, cry on him then till he show you a sign, till he lift up a rod ;
Hath he made not the nations to know him of old if indeed he be God ?
Is no heat of him left in the ashes of thousands burnt up for his sake ?
Can prayer not rekindle the flashes that shone in his face from the stake ?
Cry aloud ; for your God is a God and a Saviour ; cry, make yourselves lean ;
Is he drunk or asleep, that the rod of his wrath is unfelt and unseen ?
Is the fire of his old loving-kindness gone out, that his pyres are acold ?
Hath he gazed on himself unto blindness, who made men blind to behold ?
Cry out, for his kingdom is shaken ; cry out, for the people blaspheme ;
Cry aloud till his godhead awaken ; what doth he to sleep and to dream ?
Cry, cut yourselves, gash you with knives and with scourges, heap on to you dust;
Is his life but as other gods' lives ? is not this the Lord God of your trust ?
Is not this the great God of your sires, that with souls and with bodies was fed,
And the world was on flame with his fires ? O fools, he was God, and is dead.
He will hear not again the strong crying of earth in his ears as before,
And the fume of his multitudes dying shall flatter his nostrils no more.
By the spirit he ruled as his slave is he slain who was mighty to slay,
And the stone that is sealed on his grave he shall rise not and roll not away.
Yea, weep to him, lift up your hands ; be your eyes as a fountain of tears ;
Where he stood there is nothing that stands; if he call, there is no man that hears.
He hath doffed his king's raiment of lies now the wane of his kingdom is come;
Ears hath he, and hears not ; and eyes, and he sees not ; and mouth, and is dumb.
His red king's raiment is ripped from him naked, his staff broken down ;
And the signs of his empire are stripped from him shuddering; and where is his crown?
And in vain by the wellsprings refrozen ye cry for the warmth of his sun—

O God, the Lord God of thy chosen, thy will in thy kingdom be done.
Kingdom and will hath he none in him left him, nor warmth in his breath ;
Till his corpse be cast out of the sun will ye know not the truth of his death ?
Surely, ye say, he is strong, though the times be against him and men ;
Yet a little, ye say, and how long, till he come to show judgment again ?
Shall God then die as the beasts die? who is it hath broken his rod?
O God, Lord God of thy priests, rise up now and show thyself God.

They cry out, thine elect, thine aspirants to heavenward, whose faith is as flame;
O thou the Lord God of our tyrants, they call thee, their God, by thy name.
By thy name that in hell-fire was written, and burned at the point of thy sword.
Thou art smitten, thou God, thou art smitten ; thy death is upon thee, O Lord
And the love-song of earth as thou diest resounds through the wind of her wings—
Glory to Man in the highest ! for Man is master of things.

THE PILGRIMS.

Who is your lady of love, O ye that pass
Singing? and is it for sorrow of that which was
That ye sing sadly, or dream of what shall be?
For gladly at once and sadly it seems ye sing.
—Our lady of love by you is unbeholden ;
For hands she hath none, nor eyes, nor lips, nor golden
Treasure of hair, nor face nor form ; but we
That love, we know her more fair than anything.

—Is she a queen, having great gifts to give?
—Yea, these ; that whoso hath seen her shall not live
Except he serve her sorrowing, with strange pain,
Travail and bloodshedding and bitterer tears ;
And when she bids die he shall surely die.
And he shall leave all things under the sky
And go forth naked under sun and rain
And work and wait and watch out all his years.

—Hath she on earth no place of habitation?
—Age to age calling, nation answering nation,
Cries out, Where is she? and there is none to say ;
For if she be not in the spirit of men.
For if in the inward soul she hath no place,
In vain they cry unto her, seeking her face.
In vain their mouths make much of her ; for they
Cry with vain tongues, till the heart lives again.

—O ye that follow, and have ye no repentance?
For on your brows is written a mortal sentence,
An hieroglyph of sorrow, a fiery sign.
That in your lives ye shall not pause or rest,
Nor have the sure sweet common love, nor keep
Friends and safe days, nor joy of life nor sleep.
—These have we not, who have one thing, the divine
Face and clear eyes of faith and fruitful breast.

—And ye shall die before your thrones be won.
—Yea, and the changed world and the liberal sun
Shall move and shine without us, and we lie
Dead ; but if she too move on earth and live,
But if the old world with all the old irons rent

Laugh and give thanks, shall we be not content?
Nay, we shall rather live, we shall not die,
Life being so little and death so good to give.

And these men shall forget you—Yea, but we
Shall be a part of the earth and the ancient sea,
And heaven high air august, and awful fire,
And all things good; and no man's heart shall beat
But somewhat in it of our blood once shed
Shall quiver and quicken, as now in us the dead
Blood of men slain and the old same life's desire
Plants in their fiery footprints our fresh feet.

But ye that might be clothed with all things pleasant,
Ye are foolish that put off the fair soft present,
That clothe yourselves with the cold future air;
When mother and father and tender sister and brother
And the old live love that was shall be as ye,
Dust, and no fruit of loving life shall be.
—She shall be yet who is more than all these were,
Than sister or wife or father unto us or mother.

—Is this worth life, is this, to win for wages?
Lo, the dead mouths of the awful grey grown ages,
The venerable, in the past that is their prison,
In the outer darkness, in the unopening grave,
Laugh, knowing how many as ye now say have said,
How many, and all are fallen, are fallen and dead:
Shall ye dead rise, and these dead have not risen:
—Not we but she, who is tender and swift to save.

—Are ye not weary and faint not by the way
Seeing night by night devoured of day by day,
Seeing hour by hour consumed in sleepless fire?
Sleepless; and ye too, when shall ye too sleep?
—We are weary in heart and head, in hands and feet,
And surely more than all things sleep were sweet,
Than all things save the inexorable desire
Which whoso knoweth shall neither faint nor weep.

—Is this so sweet that one were fain to follow?
Is this so sure where all men's hopes are hollow,
Even this your dream, that by much tribulation
Ye shall make whole flawed hearts, and bowed necks straight?
—Nay though our life were blind, our death were fruitless,
Not therefore were the whole world's high hope rootless;
But man to man, nation would turn to nation,
And the old life live, and the old great world be great.

—Pass on then and pass by us and let us be,
For what light think ye after life to see?
And if the world fare better will ye know?
And if man triumph who shall seek you and say?
—Enough of light is this for one life's span,
That all men born are mortal, but not man:
And we men bring death lives by night to sow,
That man may reap and eat and live by day

ARMAND BARBÈS.

I.

FIRE out of heaven, a flower of perfect fire,
That where the roots of life are had its root
And where the fruits of time are brought forth fruit ;
A faith made flesh, a visible desire
That heard the yet unbreathing years respire,
And speech break forth of centuries that sit mute
Beyond all feebler footprint of pursuit ;
That touched the highest of hope and went up higher ;
A heart love-wounded whereto love was law,
A soul reproachless without fear or flaw.
A shining spirit without shadow of shame,
A memory made of all men's love and awe,
Being disembodied, so thou be the same,
What need, O soul, to sign thee with thy name ?

II.

All woes of all men sat upon thy soul
And all their wrongs were heavy on thy head ;
With all their wounds thy heart was pierced and bled.
And in thy spirit as in a mourning scroll
The world's huge sorrows were inscribed by roll,
All theirs on earth who serve and faint for bread,
All banished men's, all theirs in prison dead,
Thy love had heart and sword-hand for the whole.
"This was my day of glory," didst thou say,
When, by the scaffold thou hadst hope to climb
For thy faith's sake they brought thee respite ; "Nay,
I shall not die then, I have missed my day."
O hero, O our help, O head sublime,
Thy day shall be commensurate with time.

QUIA MULTUM AMAVIT.

AM I not he that hath made thee and begotten thee,
I, God, the spirit of man ?
Wherefore now these eighteen years hast thou forgotten me,
From whom thy life began ?
Thy life-blood and thy life-breath and thy beauty,
Thy might of hands and feet,
Thy soul made strong for divinity of duty
And service which was sweet.
Through the red sea brimmed with blood didst thou not follow me,
As one that walks in trance ?
Was the storm strong to break or the sea to swallow thee,
When thou wast free and France ?
I am Freedom, God and man, O France, that plead with thee ;
How long now shall I plead ?

Was I not with thee in travail, and in need with thee,
Thy sore travail and need ?
Thou wast fairest and first of my virgin-vested daughters,
Fairest and foremost thou ;
And thy breast was white, though thy hands were red with slaughters,
Thy breast, a harlot's now.
O foolish virgin and fair among the fallen,
A ruin where satyrs dance,
A garden wasted for beasts to crawl and brawl in,
What hast thou done with France ?
Where is she who bared her bosom but to thunder,
Her brow to storm and flame,
And before her face was the red sea cloven in sunder,
And all its waves made tame ?

And the surf wherein the broad-based rocks were shaking
She saw far off divide,
At the blast of the breath of the battle blown and breaking,
And weight of wind and tide;
And the ravin and the ruin of thronèd nations
And every royal race,
And the kingdoms and kings from the state of their high stations
That fell before her face.
Yea, great was the fall of them, all that rose against her.
From the earth's old-historied heights;
For my hands were fire, and my wings as walls that fenced her,
Mine eyes as pilot-lights.
Not as guerdons given of kings the gifts I brought her,
Not strengths that pass away;
But my heart, my breath of life, O France, O daughter,
I gave thee in that day,
Yea, the heart's blood of a very God I gave thee,
Breathed in thy mouth his breath;
Was my word as a man's having no more strength to save thee
From this worse thing than death?
Didst thou dream of it only, the day that I stood nigh thee,
Was all its light a dream?
When that iron surf roared backwards and went by thee
Unscathed of storm or stream:
When thy sons rose up and thy young men stood together,
One equal face of fight,
And my flag swam high as the swimming sea-foam's feather
Laughing, a lamp of light?
Ah the lordly laughter and light of it, that lightened
Heaven-high, the heaven's whole length!
Ah the hearts of heroes pierced, the bright lips whitened
Of strong men in their strength!
Ah the banner-poles, the stretch of straightening streamers
Straining their full reach out!
Ah the men's hands making true the dreams of dreamers,
The hopes brought forth in doubt!
Ah the noise of horse, the charge and thunder of drumming,
And swaying and sweep of swords
Ah the light that led them through of the world's life coming,
Clear of its lies and lords!
By the lightning of the lips of guns whose flashes
Made plain the strayed world's way;
By the flame that left her dead old sins in ashes,
Swept out of sight of day;
By thy children whose bare feet were shod with thunder,
Their bare hands mailed with fire;
By the faith that went with them, waking fear and wonder,
Heart's love and high desire;
By the tumult of the waves of nations waking
Blind in the loud wide night;
By the wind that went on the world's waste waters, making
Their marble darkness white,
As the flash of the flakes of the foam flared lamplike, leaping
From wave to gladdening wave,
Making wide the fast-shut eyes of thraldom sleeping
The sleep of the unclean grave;
By the fire of equality, terrible, devouring,
Divine, that brought forth good;
By the lands it purged and wasted and left flowering
With bloom of brotherhood;
By the lips of fraternity that for love's sake uttered
Fierce words and fires of death,
But the eyes were deep as love's and the fierce lips fluttered
With love's own living breath;
By the weaponed hands, brows helmed and bare feet spurning
The bared head of a king:
By the storm of sunrise round thee risen and burning
Why hast thou done this thing?
Thou hast mixed thy limbs with the son of a harlot a stranger
Mouth to mouth limb to limb,
Thou, bride of a God, because of the brides man Danger
To bring forth seed to him.
For thou thoughtest only the terrible bride groom wakes me.
When I would sleep, to go;

The fire of his mouth consumes, and the red
kiss shakes me,
More bitter than a blow.
Rise up, my beloved, go forth to meet the
stranger,
Put forth thine arm, he saith:
Fear thou not at all though the bridesman
should be Danger,
The bridesmaid should be Death.
I the bridegroom, am I not with thee, O
bridal nation
O wedded France to strive?
To destroy the sins of the earth with divine
devastation,
Till none be left alive?
Lo her growths of sons, foliage of men and
frondage,
Broad boughs of the old-world tree
With iron of shame and with pruning-hooks
of bondage
They are shorn from sea to sea.
Lo, I set wings to thy feet that have been
wingless,
Till the utter race be run;
Till the priestless temples cry to the thrones
made kingless,
Are we not also undone?
Till the immeasurable Republic arise and
enlighten
Above these quick and dead,
And her awful robes be changed and her
red robes whiten,
Her warring-robes of red
But thou wouldst not, saying, I am weary
and faint to follow,
Let me lie down and rest;
And hast sought out shame to sleep with,
mire to wallow,
Yea, a much fouler breast:
And thine own hast made prostitute, sold
and shamed and bared it,
Thy bosom which was mine,
And the bread of the world I gave thee
hast soiled, and shared it
Among these snakes and swine.
As a harlot thou wast handled and polluted.
Thy faith held light as foam,
That thou sentest men thy sons, thy sons
imbruted,
To slay thine elder Rome.
Therefore, O harlot, I gave thee to the
accurst one,
By night to be defiled,
To thy second shame, and a fouler than
the first one,
That got thee first with child.
Yet I know thee turning back now to be
hold me,
To bow thee and make thee bare,
Not for sin's sake but penitence, by my feet
to hold me,
And wipe them with thine hair.
And sweet ointment of thy grief thou hast
brought thy master,
And set before thy lord,
From a box of flawed and broken alabaster,
Thy broken spirit, poured.
And love-offerings, tears and perfumes,
hast thou given me,
To reach my feet and touch;
Therefore thy sins, which are many, are
forgiven thee,
Because thou hast loved much.

18 brumaire, an 78.

GENESIS.

In the outer world that was before this
earth,
That was before all shape or space was
born,
Before the blind first hour of time had
birth,
Before night knew the moonlight or the
morn:

Yea, before any world had any light,
Or anything called God or man drew
breath,
Slowly the strong sides of the heaving
night
Moved, and brought forth the strength
of life and death.

And the sad shapeless horror increate
That was all things and one thing, with
out fruit,
Limit, or law; where love was none, nor
hate,
Where no leaf came to blossom from no
root;

The very darkness that time knew not of,
Nor God laid hand on, nor was man found there,
Ceased, and was cloven in several shapes; above
Light, and night under, and fire, earth, water, and air.

Sunbeams and starbeams, and all colored things,
All forms and all similitudes began;
And death, the shadow cast by life's wide wings,
And God, the shade cast by the soul of man.

Then between shadow and substance, night and light,
Then between birth and death, and deeds and days
The illimitable embrace and the amorous fight
That of itself begets, bears, rears, and slays,

The immortal war of mortal things, that is
Labor and life and growth and good and ill,
The mild antiphonies that melt and kiss,
The violent symphonies that meet and kill,

All nature of all things began to be.
But chiefliest in the spirit (beast or man,
Planet of heaven or blossom of earth or sea)
The divine contraries of life began.

For the great labor of growth, being many, is one;
One thing the white death and the ruddy birth;
The invisible air and the all-beholden sun,
And barren water and many-childed earth

And these things are made manifest in men
From the beginning forth unto this day:
Time writes and life records them, and again
Death seals them lest the record pass away.

For if death were not, then should growth not be,
Change, nor the life of good nor evil things;
Nor were there night at all nor light to see,
Nor water of sweet nor water of bitter springs.

For in each man and each year that is born
Are sown the twin seeds of the strong twin powers;
The white seed of the fruitful helpful morn,
The black seed of the barren hurtful hours.

And he that of the black seed eateth fruit,
To him the savor as honey shall be sweet;
And he in whom the white seed hath struck root,
He shall have sorrow and trouble and tears for meat.

And him whose lips the sweet fruit hath made red
In the end men loathe and make his name a rod;
And him whose mouth on the unsweet fruit hath fed
In the end men follow and know for very God.

And of these twain, the black seed and the white,
All things come forth endured of men and done;
And still the day is great with child of night,
And still the black night labors with the sun.

And each man and each year that lives on earth
Turns hither or thither, and hence or thence is fed;
And as a man before was from his birth,
So shall a man be after among the dead.

TO WALT WHITMAN IN AMERICA.

SEND but a song oversea for us.
Heart of their hearts who are free,
Heart of their singer, to be for us
More than our singing can be ;
Ours, in the tempest at error,
With no light but the twilight of terror ;
Send us a song oversea !

Sweet-smelling of pine-leaves and grasses,
And blown as a tree through and through
With the winds of thee keen mountain-passes,
And tender as sun-smitten dew ;
Sharp-tongued as the winter that shakes
The wastes of your limitless lakes,
Wide-eyed as the sea-line's blue.

O strong-winged soul with prophetic
Lips hot with the bloodbeats of song
With tremor of heartstrings magnetic,
With thoughts as thunders in throng,
With consonant ardors of chords
That pierce men's souls as with swords
And hale them hearing along,

Make us too music, to be with us
As a word from a world's heart warm,
To sail the dark as a sea with us,
Full-sailed, outsinging the storm,
A song to put fire in our ears
Whose burning shall burn up tears,
Whose sign bid battle reform ;

A note in the ranks of a clarion,
A word in the wind of cheer,
To consume as with lightning the carrion
That makes time foul for us here ;
In the air that our dead things infest
A blast of the breath of the west,
Till east way as west way is clear.

Out of the sun beyond sunset,
From the evening whence morning shall be,
With the rollers in measureless onset,
With the van of the storming sea,
With the world-wide wind, with the breath
That breaks ships driven upon death,
With the passion of all things free,
With the sea-steeds footless and frantic,
White myriads for death to bestride
In the charge of the ruining Atlantic
Where deaths by regiments ride,
With clouds and clamors of waters,
With a long note shriller than slaughter's
On the furrowless fields world-wide,

With terror, with ardor and wonder,
With the soul of the season that wakes
When the weight of a whole year's thunder
In the tidestream of autumn breaks,
Let the flight of the wide-winged word
Come over, come in and be heard,
Take form and fire for our sakes.

For a continent bloodless with travail
Here toils and brawls as it can,
And the web of it who shall unravel
Of all that peer on the plan ;
Would fain grow men, but they grow not,
And fain be free, but they know not
One name for freedom and man ?

One name, not twain for division ;
One thing, not twain, from the birth ;
Spirit and substance and vision,
Worth more than worship is worth ;
Unbeheld, unadored, undivined,
The cause, the centre, the mind,
The secret and sense of the earth.

Here as a weakling in irons,
Here as a weanling in bands
As a prey that the stake-net environs,
Our life that we looked for stands ;
And the man-child naked and dear,
Democracy, turns on us here
Eyes trembling with tremulous hands.

It sees not what season shall bring to it
Sweet fruit of its bitter desire ;
Few voices it hears yet sing to it,
Few pulses of hearts reaspire ;
Foresees not time, nor forehears
The noises of imminent years,
Earthquake, and thunder, and fire:

When crowned and weaponed and curbless
  It shall walk without helm or shield
The bare burnt furrows and herbless
  Of wars last flame-stricken field,
Till godlike, equal with time,
It stand in the sun sublime,
  In the godhead of man revealed.

Round your people and over them
  Light like raiment is drawn,
Close as a garment to cover them
  Wrought not of mail nor of lawn :
Here, with hope hardly to wear,
Naked nations and bare
  Swim, sink, strike out for the dawn.

Chains are here, and a prison,
  Kings, and subjects, and shame :
If the God upon you be arisen.
  How should our songs be the same ?
How in confusion of change,
How shall we sing, in a strange
  Land songs praising his name ?

God is buried and dead to us
  Even the spirit of earth.
Freedom : so have they said to us,
  Some with mocking and mirth,
Some with heartbreak and tears :
And a God without eyes, without ears
  Who shall sing of him dead in the birth ?

The earth god Freedom, the lonely
  Face lightening, the footprint unshod.
Not as one man crucified only
  Nor scoured with but one life's rod:
The soul that is substance or nations,
Reincarnate with fresh generations ;
  The great god Man, which is God.

But in weariest of years and obscurest
  Doth it live not at heart of all things
The one God and one spirit, a purest
  Life, fed from unstanchable springs :
Within love ; within hatred it is,
And its seed in the stripe as the kiss,
  And in slaves is the germ, and in kings.

Freedom we call it, for holier
  Name of the soul's there is none ;
Surelier it labors, if slowlier,
  Than the metres of star or of sun
Slowlier than life unto breath
Surelier than time unto death,
  It moves till its labor be done.

Till the motion be done and the measure
  Circling through season and clime.
Slumber and sorrow and pleasure,
  Vision of virtue and crime ;
Till consummate with conquering eyes,
A soul disembodied, it rise
  From the body transfigured of time.

Till it rise and remain and take station
  With the stars of the world that rejoice ;
Till the voice of its heart's exultation
  Be as theirs an invariable voice
By no discord of evil estranged,
By no pause by no breach in it changed
  By no clash in the chord of its choice.

It is one with the world's generations,
  With the spirit the star and the sod :
With the kingless and king-stricken nation,
  With the cross, and the chain, and the rod
The most high, the most secret, most lonely,
The earth-soul Freedom, that only
  Lives, and that only is God

CHRISTMAS ANTIPHONES.

I.

IN CHURCH.

THOU whose birth on earth
  Angels sang to men
While thy stars made mirth,
Saviour, at thy birth
  This day born again ;

As this night was bright
  With thy cradle ray,
Very light of light.
Turn the wild world's night
  To thy perfect day.

God whose feet made sweet
  Those wild ways they trod,
From thy fragrant feet
Staining field and street
  With the blood of God ;

God whose breast is rest
  In the time of strife,

In thy secret breast
Sheltering souls opprest
From the heat of life ;

God whose eyes are skies
Love-lit as with spheres
By the lights that rise
To thy watching eyes,
Orbèd lights of tears ;

God whose heart hath part
In all grief that is,
Was no man's the dart
That went through thine heart,
And the wound not his ?

Where the pale souls wail,
Held in the bonds of death,
Where all spirits quail,
Came thy Godhead pale
Still from human breath—

Pale from life and strife,
Wan with manhood, came
Forth of mortal life,
Pierced as with a knife,
Scarred as with a flame.

Thou the Word and Lord
In all time and space
Heard, beheld, adored,
With all ages poured
Forth before thy face,

Lord, what worth in earth
Drew thee down to die ?
What therein was worth,
Lord, thy death and birth ?
What beneath thy sky ?

Light above all love
By thy love was lit,
And brought down the Dove
Feathered from above
With the wings of it.

From the height of night,
Was not thine the star
That led forth with might
By no wordly light
Wise men from afar ?

Yet the wise men's eyes
Saw thee not more clear
Than they saw thee rise
Who in shepherd s guise
Drew as poor men near.

Yet thy poor endure,
And are with us yet,
Be thy name a sure
Refuge for thy poor
Whom men's eyes forget.

Thou whose ways we praise,
Clear alike and dark,
Keep our works and ways
This and all thy days
Safe inside thine ark.

Who shall keep thy sheep,
Lord, and lose not one ?
Who save one shall keep,
Lest the shepherds sleep ?
Who beside the Son ?

From the grave-deep wave,
From the sword and flame,
Thou, even thou, shalt save
Souls of king and slave
Only by thy Name.

Light not born with morn
Or her fires above,
Jesus virgin-born,
Held of men in scorn,
Turn their scorn to love.

Thou whose face gives grace
As the sun's doth heat,
Let thy sunbright face
Lighten time and space
Here beneath thy feet.

Bid our peace increase,
Thou that madest morn ;
Bid oppressions cease ;
Bid the night be peace ;
Bid the day be born.

II.

OUTSIDE CHURCH.

We whose days and ways
All the night makes dark,
What day shall we praise
Of these weary days
That our life-drops mark ?

We whose mind is blind,
Fed with hope of nought;
Wastes of worn mankind,
Without heart or mind,
Without meat or thought;

We with strife of life
Worn till all life cease,
Want, a whetted knife,
Sharpening strife on strife,
How should we love peace?

Ye whose meat is sweet
And your wine-cup red,
Us beneath your feet
Hunger grinds as wheat,
Grinds to make you bread.

Ye whose night is bright
With soft rest and heat,
Clothed like day with light,
Us the naked night
Slays from street to street.

Hath your God no rod,
That ye tread so light?
Man on us as God,
God as man hath trod,
Trod us down with might.

We that one by one
Bleed from either's rod,
What for us hath done
Man beneath the sun,
What for us hath God?

We whose blood is food
Given your wealth to feed,
From the Christless rood
Red with no God's blood,
But with man's indeed;

How shall we that see
Night-long overhead
Life, the flowerless tree,
Nailed whereon as we
Were our fathers dead—

We whose ear can hear,
Not whose tongue can name,
Famine, ignorance, fear,
Bleeding tear by tear
Year by year of shame,

Till the dry life die
Out of bloodless breast
Out of beamless eye,
Out of mouths that cry
Till death feed with rest—

How shall we as ye,
Though ye bid us, pray?
Though ye call, can we
Hear you call, or see,
Though ye show us day?

We whose name is shame,
We whose souls walk bare,
Shall we call the same
God as ye by name,
Teach our lips your prayer?

God, forgive and give,
For His sake who died?
Nay, for ours who live,
How shall we forgive
Thee, then, on our side?

We whose right to light
Whom the blind beams smite
Heaven's high noon denies,
That for you shine bright,
And but burn our eyes,

With what dreams of beams
Shall we build up day,
At what sourceless streams
Seek to drink in dreams
Ere they pass away?

In what street shall meet,
At what market-place,
Your feet and our feet,
With one goal to greet,
Having run one race?

What one hope shall ope
For us all as one
One some horoscope,
Where the soul sees hope
That outburns the sun?

At what shrine what wine,
At what board what bread,
Salt as blood or brine,
Shall we share in sign
How we poor were fed?

In what hour what power
Shall we pray for morn,
If your perfect hour,
When all day bears flower,
Not for us is born?

III.

BEYOND CHURCH.

YE that weep in sleep,
Souls and bodies bound,
Ye that all night keep
Watch for change, and weep
That no change is found;

Ye that cry and die,
And the world goes on
Without ear or eye,
And the days go by
Till all days are gone;

Man shall do for you,
Men the sons of man,
What no God would do
That they sought unto
While the blind years ran.

Brotherhood of good,
Equal laws and rights,
Freedom, whose sweet food
Feeds the multitude
All their days and nights,

With the bread full-fed
Of her body blest
And the soul's wine shed
From her table spread
Where the world is guest,

Mingling me and thee,
When like light of eyes
Flashed through thee and me
Truth shall make us free,
Liberty make wise;

These are they whom day
Follows and gives light
Whence they see to slay
Night, and burn away
All the seed of night.

What of thine and mine,
What of want and wealth,
When one faith is wine
For my heart and thine
And one draught is health?

For no sect elect
Is the soul's wine poured
And her table decked;
Whom should man reject
From man's common board?

Gods refuse and choose;
Grudge and sell and spare;
None shall man refuse,
None of all men lose,
None leave out of care.

No man's might of sight
Knows that hour before;
No man's hand hath might
To put back that light
For one hour the more.

Not though all men call,
Kneeling with void hands,
Shall they see light fall
Till it come for all
Tribes of men and lands.

No desire brings fire
Down from heaven by prayer
Though man's vain desire
Hang faith's wind struck lyre
Out in tuneless air

One hath breath and saith
What the tune shall be—
Time, who puts his breath
Into life and death
Into earth and sea.

To and fro years flow
Fill their tides and ebb,
As his fingers go
Weaving to and fro
One unfinished web.

All the range of change
Hath its bounds therein,
All the lives that range
All the byways strange
Named of death or sin.

Star from far to star
Speaks, and white moons wake
Watchful from afar
What the night's ways are
For the morning's sake.

Many names and flames
Pass and flash and fall,
Night-begotten names,
And the night reclaims,
As she bare them, all.

But the sun is one,
And the sun's name Right;
And when light is none
Saving of the sun,
All men shall have light.

All shall see and be
Parcel of the morn;
Ay, though blind were we,
None shall choose but see
When that day is born.

A NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE.

To Joseph Mazzini.

"Send the stars light, but send not love to me."—*Shelley.*

1.

Out of the dawning heavens that hear
Young wings and feet of the new year
Move through their twilight, and shed round
Soft showers of sound,
Soothing the season with sweet rain,
If greeting come to make me fain,
What is it I can send again?

2.

I know not if the year shall send
Tidings to usward as a friend,
And salutation, and such things
Bear on his wings
As the soul turns and thirsts unto
With hungering eyes and lips that sue
For that sweet food which makes all new.

3.

I know not if his light shall be
Darkness, or else light verily:
I know but that it will not part
Heart's faith from heart,
Truth from the trust in truth, nor hope
From sight of days unscaled that ope
Beyond one poor year's horoscope.

4.

That faith in love which love's self gives,
O master of my spirit, lives,
Having in presence unremoved
Thine head beloved,
The shadow of thee, the semitone
Of thy voice heard at heart and known,
The light of thee not set nor flown.

5.

Seas, lands, and hours, can these divide
Love from love's service, side from side,
Though no sound pass nor breath be heard
Of one good word?
To send back words of trust to thee
Were to send wings to love, when he
With his own strong wings covers me.

6.

Who shall teach singing to the spheres,
Or motion to the flight of years?
Let soul with soul keep hand in hand
And understand,
As in one same abiding-place
We keep one watch for one same face
To rise in some short sacred space.

7.

And all space midway is but nought
To keep true heart from faithful thought,
As under twilight stars we wait
By Time's shut gate
Till the slow soundless hinges turn,
And through the depth of years that yearn
The face of the Republic burn.

1870.

MATER DOLOROSA.

Citoyen, lui dit Enjolras, ma mère, c'est la République.—*Les Miserables.*

WHO is this that sits by the way, by the wild wayside,
In a rent stained raiment, the robe of a cast-off bride,
In the dust, in the rainfall sitting, with soiled feet bare,
With the night for a garment upon her, with torn wet hair?
She is fairer of face than the daughters of men, and her eyes,
Worn through with her tears, are deep as the depth of skies.

This is she for whose sake being fallen, for whose abject sake,
Earth groans in the blackness of darkness, and men's hearts break
This is she for whose love, having seen her the men that were
Poured life out as water, and shed their souls upon air
This is she for whose glory their years were counted as foam;
Whose face was a light upon Greece was a fire upon Rome

Is it now not surely a vain thing, a foolish and vain,
To sit down by her, mourn to her, serve her, partake in the pain?
She is grey with the dust of time on his manifold ways,
Where her faint feet stumble and falter through yearlong days
Shall she help us at all, O fools, give fruit or give fame,
Who herself is a name despised, a rejected name?

We have not served her for guerdon. If any do so,
That his mouth may be sweet with such honey, we care not to know
We have drunk from a wine-unsweetened, a perilous cup,
A draught very bitter. The kings of the earth stood up,
And the rulers took counsel together to smite her and slay;
And the blood of her wounds is given us to drink to-day.

Can these bones live? or the leaves that are dead leaves bud?
Or the dead blood drawn from her veins be in your veins blood?
Will ye gather up water again that was drawn and shed?
In the blood is the life of the veins, and her veins are dead
For the lives that are over are over, and past things past;
She had her day, and it is not; was first, and is last.

Is it nothing unto you then, all ye that pass by
If her breath be left in her lips if she live now or die?
Behold now, O people, and say if she be not fair
Whom your fathers followed to find her with praise and prayer,
And rejoiced having found her, though roof they had none nor bread;
But ye care not; what is it to you if her own day be dead?

It was well with our fathers; their sound was in all men's heads;
There was fire in their hearts, and the hunger of fight in their hands.
Naked and strong they went forth on her strength like flame,
For her loves and her name's sake of old, her republican name.
But their children by kings made quiet, by priests made wise,
Love better the heat of their hearths than the light of her eyes.

Are they children of these thy children indeed who have sold
O golden goddess the light of thy face for gold?

Are they sons indeed the sons of thy day-spring of hope,
Whose lives are in fief of an emperor, whose souls of a Pope?
Hide then thine head, O beloved; thy time is done;
Thy kingdom is broken in heaven, and blind thy sun.

What sleep is upon you, to dream she indeed shall rise,
When the hopes are dead in her heart as the tears in her eyes?
If ye sing of her dead will she stir? if ye weep for her, weep?
Come away now, leave her; what hath she to do but sleep?

But ye that mourn are alive, and have years to be;
And life is good, and the world is wiser than we.

Yea, wise is the world and mighty, with years to give,
And years to promise; but how long now shall it live?
And foolish and poor is faith, and her ways are bare,
Till she find the way of the sun, and the morning air,
In that hour shall this dead face shine as the face of the sun,
And the soul of man and her soul and the world's be one.

MATER TRIUMPHALIS.

MOTHER of man's time-travelling generations,
Breath of his nostrils, heartblood of his heart,
God above all Gods worshipped of all nations,
Light above light, law beyond law thou art.

Thy face is as a sword smiting in sunder
Shadows and chains and dreams and iron things;
The sea is dumb before thy face, the thunder
Silent, the skies are narrower than thy wings.

Angels and Gods, spirit and sense, thou takest
In thy right hand as drops of dust or dew;
The temples and the towers of time thou breakest,
His thoughts and words and works, to make them new.

All we have wandered from thy ways, nave hidden
Eyes from thy glory and ears from calls they heard:
Called of thy trumpets vainly, called and chidden,
Scourged of thy speech and wounded of thy word

We have known thee and have not known thee; stood beside thee,
Felt thy lips breathe, set foot where thy feed trod,
Loved and renounced and worshipped and denied thee,
As thou thou wert but as another God.

"One hour for sleep," we said, "and yet one other;
All day we served her, and who shall serve by night?
Not knowing of thee, thy face not knowing, O mother,
O light wherethrough the darkness is as light.

Men that forsook thee hast thou not forsaken,
Races of men that knew not hast thou known;
Nations that slept thou hast doubted not to waken
Worshippers of strange Gods to make thine own.

All old grey histories hiding thy clear features,
O secret spirit and sovereign, all men's tales,
Creeds woven of men thy children and thy creatures,
They have woven for vestures of thee and for veils.

Thine hands, without election or exemption,
Feed all men fainting from false peace or strife,
O thou, the resurrection and redemption,
The godhead and the manhood and the life.

The wings shadow the waters; thine eyes lighten
The horror of the hollows of the night;
The depths of the earth and the dark places brighten
Under thy feet, whiter than fire is white.

Death is subdued to thee, and hell's bands broken;
Where thou art only is heaven; who hears not thee,
Time shall not hear him; when men's names are spoken,
A nameless sign of death shall his name be.

Deathless shall be the death, the name be nameless;
Sterile of stars his twilight time of death;
With fire of hell shall shame consume him shameless,
And dying, all the night darken his death.

The years are as thy garments, the world's ages
As sandals bound and loosed from thy swift feet;
Time serves before thee, as one that hath for wages
Praise or shame only, bitter words or sweet.

Thou sayest "Well done," and all a century kindles;
Again thou sayest "Depart from sight of me,"
And all the light of face of all men dwindles,
And the age is as the broken glass of thee.

The night is as a seal set on men's faces,
On faces fallen of men that take no light
Nor give light in the deeps of the dark places,
Blind things incorporate with the body of night.

Their souls are serpents winterbound and frozen,
Their shame is as a tame beast, at their feet
Couched; their cold lips deride thee and thy chosen,
Their lying lips made grey with dust for meat.

Then when their time is full and days run over,
The splendor of thy sudden brow made bare
Darkens the morning; thy bared hands uncover
The veils of light and night and the awful air.

And the world naked as a new-born maiden
Stands virginal and splendid as at birth,
With all thine heaven of all its light unladen,
Of all its love unburdened all thine earth.

For the utter earth and the utter air of heaven
And the extreme depth is thine and the extreme height;
Shadows of things and veils of ages riven
Are as men's kings unkingdomed in thy sight.

Through the iron years, the centuries brazen gated,
By the ages barred impenetrable doors,
From the evening to the morning have we waited,
Should thy foot haply sound on the awful floors.

The floors untrodden of the sun's feet glimmer,
The star-unstricken pavements of the night;
Do the lights burn inside? the lights was dimmer
On festal faces withering out of sight.

The crowned heads lose the light on them: it may be
Dawn is at hand to smite the loud feast dumb:
To blind the torch-lit centuries till the day be,
The feasting kingdoms till thy kingdom come.

Shall it not come? deny they or dissemble,
Is it not even as lightning from on high
Now? and though many a soul close eyes and tremble,
How should they tremble at all who love thee as I?

I am thine harp between thine hands, O mother!
All my strong chords are strained with love of thee.
We grapple in love and wrestle, as each with other
Wrestle the wind and the unreluctant sea.

I am no courtier of thee sober-suited,
Who loves a little for a little pay.
Me not thy winds and storms nor thrones disrooted
Nor molten crowns nor thine own sins dismay.

Sinned hast thou sometime, therefore art thou sinless;
Stained hast thou been, who art therefore without stain;
Even as man's soul is kin to thee, but kinless
Thou, in whose womb Time sows the all-various grain.

I do not bid thee spare me, O dreadful mother!
I pray thee that thou spare not, of thy grace.
How were it with me then, if ever another
Should come to stand before thee in this my place?

I am the trumpet at thy lips, thy clarion
Full of thy cry, sonorous with thy breath;
The grave of souls born worms and creeds grown carrion
Thy blast of judgment fills with fires of death.

Thou art the player whose organ-keys are thunders,
And I beneath thy foot the pedal prest;
Thou art the ray whereat the rent night sunders,
And I the cloudlet borne upon thy breast.

I shall burn up before thee, pass and perish,
As haze in sunrise on the red sea-line;
But thou from dawn to sunsetting shalt cherish
The thoughts that led and souls that lighted mine.

Reared between night and noon and truth and error,
Each twilight-travelling bird that trills and screams
Sickens at midday, nor can face for terror
The imperious heaven's inevitable extremes.

I have no spirit of skill with equal fingers
At sign to sharpen or to slacken strings;
I keep no time of song with gold-perched singers
And chirp of linnets on the wrists of kings.

I am thy storm-thrush of the days that darken,
Thy petrel in the foam that bears thy bark
To port through night and tempest; if thou hearken,
My voice is in thy heaven before the lark.

My song is in the mist that hides thy morning,
My cry is up before the day for thee;
I have heard thee and beheld thee and give warning,
Before thy wheels divide the sky and sea.

Birds shall wake with thee voiced and feathered fairer,
To see in summer what I see in spring;
I have eyes and heart to endure thee, O thunder-bearer,
And they shall be who shall have tongues to sing.

I have love at least, and have not fear, and part not
From thine unnavigable and wingless way;
Thou tarriest, and I have not said thou art not,
Nor all thy night long have denied thy day.

Darkness to daylight shall lift up thy pæan,
Hill to hill thunder, vale cry back to vale

With wind-notes as of eagles Æschylean,
And Sappho singing in the nightingale.

Sung to by mighty sons of dawn and daughters,
Of this night's songs thine ear shall keep but one;
That supreme song which shook the channelled waters,
And called thee skyward as God calls the sun.

Come, though all heaven again be fire above thee;
Though death before thee come to clear thy sky;
Let us but see in his thy face who love thee;
Yea, though thou slay us, arise and let us die.

A MARCHING SONG

We mix from many lands,
We march for very far;
In hearts and lips and hands
Our staffs and weapons are;
The light we walk in darkens sun and moon and star.

It doth not flame and wane
With years and spheres that roll,
Storm cannot shake nor stain
The strength that makes it whole,
The fire that moulds and moves it of the sovereign soul.

We are they that have to cope
With time till time retire;
We live on hopeless hope,
We feed on tears and fire;
Time, foot by foot, gives back before our sheer desire.

From the edge of harsh derision,
From discord and defeat,
From doubt and lame division,
We pluck the fruit and eat;
And the mouth finds it bitter, and the spirit sweet.

We strive with time at wrestling
Till time be on our side
And hope, our plumeless nestling,
A full-fledged eaglet ride
Down the loud length of storm its windward wings divide.

We are girt with our belief,
Clothed with our will and crowned;
Hope, fear, delight, and grief,
Before our will give ground;
Their calls are in our ears as shadows of dead sound.

All but the heart forsakes us,
All fails us but the will;
Keen treason tracks and takes us
In pits for blood to fill;
Friend falls from friend, and faith for faith lays wait to kill.

Out under moon and stars
And shafts of the urgent sun
Whose face on prison bars
And mountain-heads is one,
Our march is everlasting till time's march be done.

Whither we know, and whence,
And dare not care where through.
Desires that urge the sense,
Fears changing old with new,
Pearls and pains beset the ways we press into;

Earth gives us thorns to tread,
And all her thorns are trod,
Through lands burnt black and red
We pass with feet unshod;
Whence we would be man shall not keep us, nor man's God.

Through the great desert beasts
Howl at our backs by night,
And thunder-forging priests
Blow their dead bale-fires bright,
And on their broken anvils beat out bolts for fight.

Inside their sacred smithies,
Though hot the hammer rings,
Their steel links snap like withies,
Their chains like twisted strings,
Their surest fetters are as plighted words of kings.

O nations undivided,
O single people and free,
We dreamers, we derided,
We mad blind men that see,
We bear you witness ere ye come that ye shall be.

Ye sitting among tombs,
Ye standing round the gate,
Whom fire-mouthed war consumes,
Or cold-lipped peace bids wait,
All tombs and bars shall open, every grave and grate.

The locks shall burst in sunder,
The hinges shrieking spin,
When time, whose hand is thunder,
Lays hand upon the pin,
And shoots the bolts reluctant, bidding all men in.

These eyeless times and earless,
Shall these not see and hear,
And all their hearts burn fearless
That were afrost for fear?
Is day not hard upon us, yea, not our day near?

France? from its grey dejection
Make manifest the red
Tempestuous resurrection
Of thy most sacred head!
Break thou the covering cerecloths; rise up from the dead.

And thou, whom sea-walls sever
From lands unwalled with seas,
Wilt thou endure for ever,
O Milton's England, these?
Thou that wast his Republic, wilt thou clasp their knees?

These royalties rust-eaten,
These worm-corroded lies,
That keep thine head storm-beaten
And sunlike strength of eyes
From the open heaven and air of intercepted skies;

These princelings with gauze winglets
That buzz in the air unfurled,
These summer-swarming kinglets
These thin worms crowned and curled,
That bask and blink and warm themselves about the world;

These fanged meridian vermin,
Shrill gnats that crowd the dusk,
Night-moths whose nestling ermine
Smells foul of mould and musk,
Blind flesh-flies hatched by dark and hampered in their husk;

These honors without honor,
These ghost-like gods of gold,
This earth that wears upon her
To keep her heart from cold
No memory more of men that brought it fire of old;

These limbs, supine, unbuckled,
In rottenness of rest,
These sleepy lips blood-suckled
And satiate of thy breast,
These dull wide mouths that drain thee dry and call thee blest;

These masters of thee mindless
That wear thee out of mind,
These children of thee kindless
That use thee out of kind,
Whose hands strew gold before thee and contempt behind;

Who have turned thy name to laughter,
Thy sea-like sounded name
That now none hearkens after
For faith in its free fame,
Who have robbed thee of thy trust and given thee of their shame;

These hours that mock each other,
These years that kill and die,
Are these thy gains, our mother,
For all thy gains thrown by?
Is this that end whose promise made thine heart so high?

With empire and with treason
The first right hand made fast,
But in man's nobler season
To put forth help the last,
Love turns from thee, and memory disavows thy past.

Lest thine own sea disclaim thee,
Lest thine own sons despise,
Lest lips shoot out that name thee
And seeing thee men shut eyes,
Take thought with all thy people, turn thine head and rise.

Turn thee, lift up thy face;
What ails thee to be dead?

Ask of thyself for grace,
Seek of thyself for bread,
And who shall starve or shame thee, blind or bruise thine head?

The same sun in thy sight,
The same sea in thine ears,
That saw thine hour at height,
That sang thy song of years,
Behold and hearken for thee, knowing thy hopes and fears.

O people, O perfect nation,
O England that shall be,
How long till thou take station?
How long till thralls live free?
How long till all thy soul be one with all thy sea?

Ye that from south to north,
Ye that from east to west,
Stretch hands of longing forth
And keep your eyes from rest,
Lo, when ye will, we bring you gifts of what is best.

From the awful northland pines
That skirt their wan dim seas
To the ardent Apennines
And sun-struck Pyrenees,
One frost on all their frondage bites the blossoming trees.

The leaves look up for light,
For heat of helpful air;
The trees of oldest height
And thin storm-shaken hair
Seek with gaunt hands up heavenward if the sun be there.

The woods where souls walk lonely,
The forests girt with night,
Desire the day-star only
And firstlings of the light
Not seen of slaves nor shining in their masters' sight.

We have the morning star,
O foolish people, O kings!
With us the day-springs are,
Even all the fresh day-springs;
For us, and with us, all the multitudes of things.

O sorrowing hearts of slaves,
We heard you beat from far!
We bring the light that saves,
We bring the morning star;
Freedom's good things we bring you, whence all good things are.

With us the winds and fountains
And lightnings live in tune;
The morning-colored mountains
That burn into the noon,
The mist's mild veil on valleys muffled from the moon:

The thunder-darkened highlands
And lowlands hot with fruit,
Sea-bays and shoals and islands,
And cliffs that foil man's foot,
And all the flower of large-limbed life and all the root:

The clangor of sea-eagles
That teach the morning mirth
With baying of heaven's beagles
That seek their prey on earth,
By sounding strait and channel, gulf and reach and firth.

With us the fields and rivers,
The grass that summer thrills,
The haze where morning quivers,
The peace at heart of hills,
The sense that kindles nature, and the soul that fills.

With us all natural sights,
All notes of natural scale;
With us the starry lights;
With us the nightingale;
With us the heart and secret of the worldly tale.

The strife of things and beauty,
The fire and light adored,
Truth, and life-lightening duty,
Love without crown or sword,
That by his might and godhead makes man god and lord.

These have we, these are ours,
That no priests give nor kings;
The honey of all these flowers,
The heart of all these springs;
Ours, for where freedom lives not, there live no good things.

Rise, ere the dawn be risen;
Come, and be all souls fed;
From field and street and prison
Come, for the feast is spread;
Live, for the truth is living; wake, for night is dead.

SIENA.

INSIDE this northern summer's fold
The fields are full of naked gold,
Broadcast from heaven on lands it loves ;
The green veiled air is full of doves;
Soft leaves that sift the sunbeams let
Light on the small warm grasses wet
Fall in short broken kisses sweet,
And break again like waves that beat
Round the sun's feet.

But I, for all this English mirth
Of golden-shod and dancing days,
And the old green-girt sweet-hearted earth
Desire what here no spells can raise.
Far hence, with holier heavens above,
The lovely city of my love
Bathes deep in the sun-satiate air
That flows round no fair thing more fair
Her beauty bare.

There the utter sky is holier, there
More pure the intense white height of air,
More clear men's eyes that mine would meet,
And the sweet springs of things more sweet.
There for this one warm note of doves
A clamor of a thousand loves
Storms the night's ear, the day's assails,
From the tempestuous nightingales,
And fills, and fails.

O gracious city well-beloved,
Italian, and a maiden crowned,
Siena, my feet are no more moved
Toward thy strange-shapen mountain-bound :
But my heart in me turns and moves
O lady loveliest of my loves,
Toward thee, to lie before thy feet
And gaze from thy fair fountain-seat
Up the sheer street ;

And the house midway hanging see
That saw Saint Catherine bodily,
Felt on its floors her sweet feet move,
And the live light of fiery love
Burn from her beautiful strange face,
As in the sanguine sacred place
Where in pure hands she took the head
Severed, and with pure lips still red
Kissed the lips dead.

For years through, sweetest of the saints,
In quiet without cease she wrought,
Till cries of men and fierce complaints
From outward moved her maiden thought ;
And prayers she heard and sighs toward France,
"God, send us back deliverance,
Send back thy servant, lest we die !"
With an exceeding bitter cry
They smote the sky.

Then in her sacred saving hands
She took the sorrows of the lands,
With maiden palms she lifted up
The sick time's blood-embittered cup,
And in her virgin garment furled
The faint limbs of a wounded world.
Clothed with calm love and clear desire,
She went forth in her soul's attire,
A missive fire.

Across the might of men that strove
It shone, and over heads of kings ;
And molten in red flames of love
Were swords and many monstrous things ;
And shields were lowered, and snapt were spears,
And sweeter-tuned the clamorous years ;
And faith came back, and peace, that were
Fled ; for she bade, saying, " Thou, God's heir,
Hast thou no care

" Lo, men lay waste thine heritage
Still, and much heathen people rage
Against thee, and devise vain things.
What comfort in the face of kings,
What counsel is there ? Turn thine eyes
And thine heart from them in like wise ;
Turn thee unto thine holy place
To help us that of God for grace
Require thy face.

For who shall hear us if not thou
In a strange land ? what doest thou there?
Thy sheep are spoiled, and the ploughers plough
Upon us ; why hast thou no care
For all this, and beyond strange hills
Liest unregardful what snow chills

Thy foldless flock, or what rains beat?
Lo, in thine ears, before thy feet,
Thy lost sheep bleat.

"And strange men feed on faultless lives,
And there is blood, and men put knives,
Shepherd, unto the young lamb's throat;
And one hath eaten, and one smote,
And one had hunger and is fed
Full of the flesh of these, and red
With blood of these as who drinks wine.
And God knoweth, who hath sent thee a sign,
If these were thine."

But the Pope's heart within him burned,
So that he rose up, seeing the sign,
And came among them; but she turned
Back to her daily way divine,
And fed her faith with silent things,
And lived her life with curbed white wings,
And mixed herself with heaven and died:
And now on the sheer city-side
Smiles like a bride.

You see her in the fresh clear gloom,
Where walls shut out the flame and bloom,
Of full-breathed summer, and the roof
Keeps the keen ardent air aloof
And sweet weight of the violent sky:
There bodily beheld on high,
She seems as one hearing in tune
Heaven within heaven, at heaven's full noon,
In sacred swoon:

A solemn swoon of sense that aches
With imminent blind heat of heaven,
While all the wide-eyed spirit wakes,
Vigilant of the supreme Seven,
Whose choral flames in God's sight move,
Made unendurable with love,
That without wind or blast or breath
Compels all things through life and death
Whither God saith.

There on the dim side-chapel wall
Thy mighty touch memorial,
Razzi, raised up, for ages dead,
And fixed for us her heavenly head:
And, rent with plaited thorn and rod,
Bared the live likeness of her God
To men's eyes turning from strange lands,
Where, pale from thine immortal hands,
Christ wounded stands;
And the blood blots his holy hair
And white brows over hungering eyes
That plead against us, and the fair
Mute lips forlorn of words or sighs
In the great torment that bends down
His bruised head with the bloomless crown.
White as the unfruitful thorn-flower,
A God beheld in dreams that were
Beheld of her.

In vain on all these sins and years
Falls the sad blood, fall the slow tears:
In vain poured forth as watersprings,
Priests, on your altars, and ye, kings,
About your seats of sanguine gold;
Still your God, spat upon and sold,
Bleeds at your hands; but now is gone
All his flock from him saving one;
Judas alone.

Surely your race it was that he.
O men signed backward with his name,
Beholding in Gethsemane
Bled the red bitter sweat of shame,
Knowing how the word of Christian should
Mean to men evil and not good,
Seem to men shameful for your sake,
Whose lips, for all the prayers they make,
Man's blood must slake.

But blood nor tears ye love not, you
That my love leads my longing to,
Fair as the world's old faith of flowers,
O golden goddesses of ours!
From what Idalian rose-pleasance
Hath Aphrodite bidden glance
The lovlier lightnings of your feet?
From what sweet Papian sward or seat
Led you more sweet?

O white three sisters, three as one,
With flowerlike arms for flowery bands
Your linked limbs glitter like the sun.
And time lies beaten at your hands.
Time and wild years and wars and men
Pass, and ye care not whence or when;
With calm lips over sweet for scorn,
Ye watch-night pass, O children born
Of the old world morn.

Ah, in this strange and shrineless place,
What doth a goddess, what a Grace,
Where no Greek worships her shrined limbs
With wreaths and Cytherean hymns?
Where no lute makes luxurious
The adoring airs in Amathus,

Till the maid, knowing her mother near,
Sobs with love, aching with sweet fear?
What do ye here?

For the outer land is sad, and wears
A raiment of a flaming fire;
And the fierce fruitless mountain stairs
Climb, yet seem wroth and loth to aspire,
Climb, and break, and are broken down,
And through their clefts and crests the town
Looks west and sees the dead sun lie,
In sanguine death that stains the sky
With angry dye.

And from the war-worn wastes without
In twilight, in the time of doubt,
One sound comes of one whisper where
Moved with low motions of slow air
The great trees nigh the castle swing
In the sad colored evening;
"*Ricorditi di me che son*
La Pia"—that small sweet word alone
Is not yet gone.

"*Ricorditi di me*"—the sound
Sole out of deep dumb days remote
Across the fiery and fatal ground
Comes tender as a hurt bird's note
To where a ghost with empty hands,
A woe-worn ghost, her palace stands
In the mid city, where the strong
Bells turn the sunset air to song,
And the towers throng.

With other face, with speech the same,
A mightier maiden's likeness came
Late among mourning men that slept,
A sacred ghost that went and wept,
Whit as the passion-wounded Lamb,
Saying, 'Ah, remember me, that am
Italia." (From deep sea to sea
Earth heard, earth knew her, that this was she.)
"*Ricorditi.*"

Love made me of all things fairest thing,
And hate unmade me; this knows he
Who with God's sacerdotal ring
Enringed mine hand, espousing me
Yea, in thy myriad-mooded woe,
Yea, Mother, hast thou not said so?
Have not our hearts within us stirred
O thou most holiest, at thy word?
Have we not heard?

As this dead tragic land that she
Found deadly, such was time to thee;
Years passed thee withering in the red
Maremma, years that deemed thee dead,
Ages that sorrowed or that scorned;
And all this while though all they mourned
Thou sawest the end of things unclean,
And the unborn that should see thee a queen.
Have we not seen?

The weary poet, thy sad son,
Upon thy soil, under thy skies,
Saw all Italian things save one—
Italia; this thing missed his eyes;
The old mother might, the breast, the face,
That reared, that lit the Roman race;
This not Leopardi saw; but we,
What is it, Mother, that we see,
What if not thee?

Look thou from Siena southward home,
Where the priest's pall hangs rent on Rome,
And through the red rent swaddling bands
Toward thine she strains her laboring hands.
Look thou and listen, and let be
All the dead quick all the bond free;
In the blind eyes let there be sight;
In the eighteen centuries of the night
Let there be light.

Bow down the beauty of thine head,
Sweet, and with lips of living breath
Kiss thy sons sleeping, and thy dead,
That there be no more sleep or death.
Give us thy light, thy might, thy love,
Whom thy face seen afar above
Drew to thy feet; and when being free,
Thou hast blest thy children born to thee,
Bless also me.

Me that when others played or slept
Sat still under thy cross and wept.
Me who so early and unaware
Felt fall on bent bared brows and hair
(Thin drops of the overflowing flood!)
The bitter blessing of thy blood;
The sacred shadow of thy pain,
Thine, the true maiden-mother, slain
And raised again.

Me consecrated, if I might,
To praise thee, or to love at least,
O mother of all men's dear delight
Thou madest a choral-souled boy pries

Before my lips had leave to sing,
Or my hands hardly strength to cling
About the intolerable tree
Whereto they had nailed my heart and thee
And said, "Let be.

For to thee too the high Fates gave
Grace to be sacrificed and save,
That being arisen, in the equal sun,
God and the People should be one;
By those red roads thy footprints trod,
Man more divine, more human God,
Saviour; that where no light was known
But darkness, and a daytime down,
Light should be shown.

Let there be light, O Italy!
For our feet falter in the night,
O lamp of living years to be,
O light of God, let there be light!
Fill with a love keener than flame
Men sealed in spirit with thy name,
The cities and the Roman skies,
Where men with other than man's eyes
Saw thy sun rise.

For theirs thou wast and thine were they
Whose names outshine thy very day;
For they are thine and theirs thou art
Whose blood beats living in man's heart,
Remembering ages fled and dead
Wherein for thy sake these men bled;
They that saw Trebia, they that see
Mentana, they in years to be
That shall see thee.

For thine are all of us, and ours
Thou; till the seasons bring to birth
A perfect people, and all the powers
Be with them that bear fruit on earth;
Till the inner heart of man be one
With freedom, and the sovereign sun;
And Time, in likeness of a guide,
Lead the Republic as a bride
Up to God's side.

COR CORDIUM.

O HEART of hearts, the chalice of love's fire,
Hid round with flowers and all the bounty of bloom.
O wonderful and perfect heart for whom
The lyrist liberty made life a lyre;
O heavenly heart at whose most dear desire
Dead love, living and singing, cleft his tomb,
And with him risen and regent in death's room
All day thy choral pulses rang full choir;
O heart whose beating blood was running song,
O sole thing sweeter than thine own songs were,
Help us for thy free love's sake to be free.
True for thy truth's sake, for thy strength's sake strong,
Till very liberty make clean and fair
The nursing earth as the sepulchral sea.

IN SAN LORENZO.

Is thine hour come to wake, O slumbering Night?
Hath not the Dawn a message in thine ear?
Though thou be stone, and sleep, yet shalt thou hear
When the word falls from heaven—Let there be light,
Thou knowest we would not do thee despite
To wake thee while the old sorrow and shame were near;
We spake not loud for thy sake, and for fear
Lest thou shouldst lose the rest that was thy right,
The blessing given thee that was thine alone,
The happiness to sleep and to be stone;
Nay, we kept silence of thee for thy sake
Albeit we knew thee alive, and left with thee
The great good gift to feel not nor to see
But will not yet thine Angel bid thee wake?

TIRESIAS.

PART I.

It is an hour before the hour of dawn.
Set in mine hand my staff and leave me here
Outside the hollow house that blind men fear,
More blind than I who live on life withdrawn
And feel on eyes that see not but foresee
The shadow of death which clothes Antigone.

Here lay her living body that here lies
Dead, if man living know what thing is death,
If life be all made up of blood and breath,
And no sense be save as of ears and eyes,
But heart there is not, tongue there is not found,
To think or sing what verge hath life or bound.

In the beginning when the powers that made
The young child man a little loved him, seeing
His joy of life and fair face of his being,
And bland and laughing with the man-child played,
As friends they saw on our divine one day
King Cadmus take to queen Harmonia.

The strength of soul that builds up as with hands
Walls spiritual and towers and towns of thought
Which only fate, not force, can bring to nought,
Took then to wife the light of all men's lands,
War's child and love's, most sweet and wise and strong,
Order of things and rule and guiding song.

It was long since: yea, even the sun that saw
Remembers hardly what was, nor how long.
And now the wise heart of the worldly song
Is perished, and the holy hand of law
Can set no tune on time, nor help again
The power of thought to build up life for men.

Yea, surely are they now transformed or dead,
And sleep below this world, where no sun warms,
Or move about it now in formless forms
Incognizable, and all their lordship fled;
And where they stood up singing crawl and hiss
With fangs that kill behind their lips that kiss.

Yet though her marriage-garment, seeming fair
Was dyed in sin and woven of jealousy
To turn their seed to poison, time shall see
The gods reissue from them, and repair
Their broken stamp of godhead, and again
Thought and wise love sing words of law to men.

I, Tiresias the prophet, seeing in Thebes
Much evil, and the misery of men's hands
Who sow with fruitless wheat the stones and sands,
With fruitful thorns the fallows and warm glebes,
Bade their hands hold lest worse hap came to pass,
But which of you had heed of Tiresias?

I am as Time's self in mine own wearied mind,
Whom the strong heavy-footed years have led
From night to night and dead men unto dead,
And from the blind hope to the memory blind;
For each man's life is woven, as Time's life is,
Of blind young hopes and old blind memories.

I am a soul outside of death and birth.
I see before me and afterward I see.
O child, O corpse, the live dead face of thee,
Whose life and death are one thing upon earth
Where day kills night and night again kills day
And dies: but where is that Harmonia?

O all-beholden light not seen of me,
Air, and warm winds that under the sun's eye
Stretch your strong wings at morning; and thou, sky,
Whose hollow circle engirdling earth and sea
All night the set stars limit, and all day
The moving sun remeasures; ye, I say,

Ye heights of hills, and thou Dircean spring
Inviolable, and ye towers that saw cast down
Seven kings keen-sighted toward your seven-faced town
And quenched the red seed of one sightless king;
And thou, for death less dreadful than for birth,
Whose wild leaves hide the horror of the earth,

O mountain whereon gods made chase of kings,
Cithæron, thou that sawest on Pentheus dead
Fangs of a mother fasten and wax red
And satiate with a son thy swollen springs,
And heardst her cry fright all thine eyries' nests
Who gave death suck at sanguine-suckling breasts;

Yea, and a grief more grievous, without name,
A curse too grievous for the name of grief,
Thou sawest, and heardst the rumor scare belief
Even unto death and madness, when the flame
Was lit whose ashes dropped about the pyre
That of two brethren made one sundering fire;

O bitter nurse, that on thine hard bare knees
Rear'dst for his fate the bloody-footed child
Whose hands should be more bloodily defiled
And the old blind feet walk wearier ways than these,
Whose seed, brought forth in darkness unto doom,
Should break as fire out of his mother's womb;

I bear you witness as ye bear to me,
Time, day, night, sun, stars, life, death, air, sea, earth,
And ye that round the human house of birth
Watch with veiled heads and weaponed hands, and see
Good things and evil, strengthless yet and dumb,
Sit in the clouds with cloudlike hours to come;

Ye forces without form and viewless powers
That have the keys of all are years in hold,
That prophecy too late with tongues of gold,
In a strange speech whose words are perished hours,
I witness to you what good things ye give
As ye to me what evil while I live.

What should I do to blame you, what to praise,
For floral hours and hours funeral?
What should I do to curse or bless at all
For winter-woven or summer-colored days?
Curse he that will and bless whoso can,
I have no common part in you with man.

I hear a springing water, whose quick sound
Makes softer the soft sunless patient air,
And the wind's hand is laid on my thin hair
Light as a lover's, and the grasses round
Have odors in them of green bloom and rain
Sweet as the kiss wherewith sleep kisses pain.

I hear the low sound of the spring of time,
Still beating as the low live throb of blood
And where its waters gathered head and flood
I hear change moving on them, and the chime
Across them of reverberate wings of hours
Sounding, and feel the future air of flowers.

The wind of change is soft as snow, and sweet
The sense thereof as roses in the sun,
The faint wind springing with the spring that run,
The dim sweet smell of flowering hopes, and heat
Of unbeholden sunrise ; yet how long
I know not, till the morning put forth song.

I prophesy of life, who live with death ;
Of joy, being sad; of sunlight, who am blind;
Of man, whose ways are alien from mankind
And his lips are not parted with man's breath;
I am a word out of the speechless years,
The tongue of time, that no man sleeps who hears.

I stand a shadow across the door of doom,
Athwart the lintel of death's house, and wait;
Nor quick nor dead, nor flexible by fate,
Nor quite of earth nor wholly of the tomb;
A voice, a vision, light as fire or air,
Driven between days that shall be and that were.

I prophesy, with feet upon a grave,
Of death cast out and life devouring death
As flame doth wood and stubble with a breath;
Of freedom, though all manhood were one slave;
Of truth, though all the world were liar; of love,
That time nor hate can raze the witness of.

Life that was given for love's sake and his law's
Their powers have no more power on; they divide
Spoils wrung from lust or wrath of man or pride,
And keen oblivion without pity or pause
Sets them on fire and scatters them on air
Like ashes shaken from a suppliant's hair.

But life they lay no hand on ; life once given
No force of theirs hath competence to take;
Life that was given for some divine thing's sake,
To mix the bitterness of earth with heaven,
Light with man's night, and music with his breath,
Dies not, but makes its living food of death.

I have seen this, who live where men are not,
In the high starless air of fruitful night
On that serenest and obscurest height
Where dead and unborn things are one in thought
And whence the live unconquerable springs
Feed full of force the torrents of new things.

I have seen this, who saw long since, being man,
As now I know not, if indeed I be,
The fair bare body of Wisdom good to see
And evil whence my light and night began;
Light on the goal and darkness on the way,
Light all through night and darkness all through day.

Mother, that by that Pegasean spring
Didst fold round in thine arms thy blinded son,
Weeping "O holiest, what thing hast thou done,
What, to my child ? woe's me that see the thing !
Is this thy love to me-ward, and hereof
Must I take sample how the gods can love ?

"O child, thou hast seen indeed, poor child of mine,
The breasts and flanks of Pallas bare in sight,
But never shalt see more the dear sun's light,
O Helicon, how great a pay is thine
For some poor antelopes and wild-deer dead,
My child's eyes hast thou taken in their stead—"

Mother, thou knowest not what he had to give,
Thy goddess though then angered, for mine eyes;
Fame and foreknowledge, and to be most most wise,
And centuries of high-thoughted life to live,
And in mine hand this guiding staff to be
As eyesight to the feet of men that see.

Perchance I shall not die at all, nor pass
The general door and lintel of men dead,
Yet even the very tongue of wisdom said
What grace should come with death to Tiersias,
What special honor that God's hand accord
Who gathers all men's nations as their lord.

And sometimes when the secret eye of thought
Is changed with obscuration, and the sense
Aches with long pain of hollow prescience,
And fieryforesight with foresuffering bought
Seems even to infect my spirit and consume,
Hunger and thirst come on me for the tomb.

I could be fain to drink my death and sleep,
And no more wrapt about with bitter dreams
Talk with the stars and with the winds and streams
And with the inevitable years, and weep;
For how should he who communes with the years
Be sometime not a living spring of tears?

O child, that guided of thine only will
Didst set thy maiden foot against the gate
To strike it open ere thine hour of fate,
Antigone, men say not thou dist ill,
For love's sake and the reverence of his awe
Divinely dying, slain by mortal law;

For love is awful as immortal death,
And through thee surely hast thy brother won
Rest, out of sight of our world-weary sun,
And in the dead land where ye ghosts draw breath,
A royal place and honor; so wast thou
Happy, though earth have hold of thee too now.

So hast thou life and name inviolable
And joy it may be, sacred and severe,
Joy secret-souled beyond all hope or fear,
A monumental joy wherein to dwell
Secluse and silent, a selected state,
Serene possession of thy proper fate.

Thou art not dead as these are dead who live
Full of blind years, a sorrow-shaken kind,
Nor as these are am I the prophet blind;
They have not life that have nor heart to give
Life, nor have eyesight who lack heart to see
When to be not is better than to be

O ye whom time but bears with for a span,
How long will ye be blind and dead, how long
Make your own souls part of your own soul's wrong?
Son of the word of the most high gods, man,
Why wilt thou make thine hour of light and breath
Emptier of all but shame than very death?

Fool, wilt thou live for ever? though thou care
With all thine heart for life to keep it fast,
Shall not thine hand forego it at the last?
Lo, thy sure hour shall take thee by the hair

Sleeping, or when thou knowest not, or
wouldst fly ;
And as men died much mightier shalt
thou die.

Yea, they are dead, men much more worth
than thou ;
The savour of heroic lives that were,
Is it not mixed into thy common air ?
The sense of them is shed about thee now :
Feel not thy brows a wind blowing from
far ?
Aches not thy forehead with a future
star ?

The light that thou may'st make out of thy
name
Is in the wind of this same hour that
drives,
Blown within reach but once of all men's
lives ;
And he that puts forth hand upon the flame
Shall have it for a garland on his head
To sign him for a king among the dead.

But these men that the lessening years be-
hold,
Who sit the most part without flame or
crown,
And brawl and sleep and wear their life-
days down
With joys and griefs ignobler than of old
And care not if the better day shall be,—
Are these or art thou dead, Antigone ?

PART II.

As when one wakes out of a waning dream
And sees with instant eyes the naked
thought
Whereof the vision as a web was wrought,
I saw beneath a heaven of cloud and gleam,
Ere yet the heart of the young sun waxed
brave,
One like a prophet standing by a grave.

In the hoar heaven was hardly beam or
breath,
And all the colored hills and fields were
grey,
And the wind wandered seeking for the
day,
And wailed as though he had found her
done to death
And this grey hour had built to bury her
The hollow twilight for a sepulchre.

But in my soul I saw as in a glass
A pale and living body full of grace
There lying, and over it the prophet's
face
Fixed ; and the face was not of Tiresias,
For such a starry fire was in his eyes
As though their light it was that made
the skies.

Such eyes should God's have been when
very love
Looked forth of them and set the sun
aflame,
And such his lips that called the light by
name
And bade the morning forth at sound
thereof ;
His face was sad and masterful as fate,
And like a star's his look compassionate.

Like a star's gazed on of sad eyes so long
It seems to yearn with pity, and all its
fire
As a man's heart to tremble with desire
And heave as though the light would bring
forth song
Yet from his face flashed lightning on
the land,
And like the thunder-bearer's was his
hand.

The steepness of strange stairs had tried his
feet,
And his lips yet seemed sick of that salt
bread
Wherewith the lips of banishment are
fed ;
But nothing was there in the world so
sweet
As the most bitter love, like God's own
grace,
Wherewith he gazed on that fair buried
face.

Grief and glad pride and passion and sharp
shame,
Wrath and remembrance, faith and hope
and hate
And pitiless pity of days degenerate,
Where in his eyes as an incorporate flame
That burned about her, and the heart
thereof
And central flower was very fire of love.

But all about her grave wherein she slept
Were noises of the wild wind-footed years
Whose footprints flying were full of blood and tears,
Shrieks as of Mænads on their hills that leapt
And yelled as beasts of ravin, and their meat
Was the rent flesh of their own sons to eat :

And fiery shadows passing with strange cries ;
And Sphinx-like shapes about the ruined lands,
And the red reek of parricidal hands
And intermixture of incestuous eyes,
And light as of that self-divided flame
Which made an end of the Cadmean name.

And I beheld again, and lo the grave,
And the bright body laid therein as dead,
And the same shadow across another head
That bowed down silent on that sleeping slave
Who was the lady of empire from her birth
And light of all the kingdoms of the earth.

Within the compass of the watcher's hand
All strengths of other men and divers powers
Were held at ease and gathered up as flowers ;
His heart was as the heart of his whole land,
And at his feet as natural servants lay
Twilight and dawn and night and laboring day.

He was most awful of the sons of God.
Even now men seeing seemed at his lips to see
The trumpet of the judgment that should be,
And in his right hand terror for a rod,
And in the breath that made the mountains bow
The horned fire of Moses on his brow

The strong wind of the coming of the Lord
Had blown as flame upon him, and brought down
On his bare head from heaven fire for a crown,
And fire was girt upon him as a sword
To smite and lighten, and on what ways he trod
There fell from him the shadow of a God

Pale, with the whole world's judgment in his eyes,
He stood and saw the grief and shame endure
That he, though highest of angels, might not cure,
And the same sins done under the same skies,
And the same slaves to the same tyrants thrown,
And fain he would have slept, and fain been stone.

But with unslumbering eyes he watched the sleep
That sealed her sense whose eyes were suns of old ;
And the night shut and opened, and behold,
The same grave where those prophets came to weep,
But she that lay therein had moved and stirred,
And where those twain had watched her stood a third.

The tripled rhyme that closed in Paradise
With Love's name sealing up its starry speech—
The tripled might of hand that found in reach
All crowns beheld far off of all men's eyes,
Song, color, carven wonders of live stone—
These were not, but the very soul alone.

The living spirit, the good gift of grace,
The faith which takes of its own blood to give
That the dead veins of buried hope may live,
Came on her sleeping, face to naked face,

And from a soul more sweet than all the south
Breathed love upon her sealed and breathless mouth.

Between her lips the breath was blown as fire,
And through her flushed veins leapt the liquid life
And with sore passion and ambiguous strife
The new birth rent her and the new desire
The will to live, the competence to be,
The sense to hearken and the soul to see.

And the third prophet standing by her grave
Stretched forth his hand and touched her, and her eyes,
Opened as sudden suns in heaven might rise,
And her soul caught from his the faith to save;
Faith above creeds faith beyond records, born
Of the pure, naked, fruitful, awful morn.
For in he daybreak now that night was dead
The light, the shadow, the delight, the pain,
The purpose and the passion of those twain,
Seemed gathered on that third prophetic head,
And all their crowns were as one crown, and one
His face with her face in the living sun.

For even with that communion of their eyes
His whole soul passed into her and made her strong;
And all the sounds and shows of shame and wrong,
The hands that slays, the lip that mocks and lies,
Temples and thrones that yet men seem to see,—
Are these dead or art thou dead, Italy?

THE SONG OF THE STANDARD.

MAIDEN most beautiful, mother most bountiful, lady of lands,
Queen and republican, crowned of the centuries whose years are thy sands,
See for thy sake what we bring to thee, Italy, here in our hands.

This is the banner thy gonfalon, fair in the front of thy fight,
Red from the hearts that were pierced for thee, white as thy mountains are white,
Green as the spring of thy soul everlasting, whose life-blood is light.

Take to thy bosom thy banner, a fair bird fit for the nest,
Feathered for flight into sunrise or sunset, for eastward or west,
Fledged for the flight everlasting, but held yet warm to thy breast.

Gather it close to thee, song-bird or storm-bearer, eagle or dove,
Lift it to sunward, a beacon beneath to the beacon above,
Green as our hope in it, white as our faith in it, red as our love
Thunder and splendor of lightning are hid in the folds of it furled;
Who shall unroll it but thou, as thy bolt to be handled and hurled,
Out of whose lips is the honey, whose bosom the milk of the world?

Out of thine hands hast thou fed us with pasture of color and song;
Glory and beauty by birthright to thee as thy garments belong;
Out of thine hands thou shalt give us as surely deliverance from wrong.

Out of thine eyes thou hast shed on us love as a lamp in our night,
Wisdom a lodestar to ships, and remembrance a flame-colored light;
Out of thine eyes thou shalt shew us as surely the sundawn of right.

Turn to us, speak to us, Italy, mother, but once and a word,
None shall not follow thee, none shall not serve thee, not one that has heard;
Twice hast thou spoken a message, and time is athirst for the third.

Kingdom and empire of peoples thou hadst, and thy lordship made one
North sea and south sea and east men and west men that look on the sun ;
Spirit was in thee and counsel, when soul in the nations was none.

Banner and beacon thou wast to the centuries of stormwind and foam,
Ages that clashed in the dark with each other, and years without home ;
Empress and prophetess wast thou, and what wilt thou now be, O Rome ?

Ah, by the faith and the hope and the love that have need of thee now,
Shines not thy face with the forethought of freedom, and burns not thy brow ?
Who is against her but all men ? and who is beside her but thou ?

Art thou not better than all men ? and where shall she turn but to thee ?
Lo, not a breath, not a beam, not a beacon from midland to sea ;
Freedom cries out for a sign among nations, and none will be free.

England in doubt of her, France in despair of her, all without heart—
Stand on her side in the vanward of ages, and strike on her part !
Strike but one stroke for the love of her love of thee, sweet that thou art !

Take in thy right hand thy banner, a strong staff fit for thine hand ;
Forth at the light of it lifted shall foul things flock from the land ;
Faster than stars from the sun shall they fly, being lighter than sand.

Green thing to green in the summer makes answer, and rose-tree to rose ;
Lily by lily the year becomes perfect ; and none of us knows
What thing is fairest of all things on earth as it brightens and blows.

This thing is fairest in all time of all things, in all time is best—
Freedom, that made thee, our mother, and suckled hers sons at thy breast ;
Take to thy bosom the nations, and there shall the world come to rest.

ON THE DOWNS.

A FAINT sea without wind or sun ;
A sky like flameless vapor dun ;
A valley like an unsealed grave
That no man cares to weep upon,
Bare, without boon to crave,
Or flower to save.

And on the lip's edge of the down,
Here where the bent-grass burns to brown
In the dry sea-wind, and the heath
Crawls to the cliff-side and looks down,
I watch, and hear beneath
The low tide breathe.

Along the long lines of the cliff,
Down the flat sea-line without skiff
Or sail or black-blown fume for mark,
Through wind-worn heads of heath and stiff
Stems blossomless and stark
With dry sprays dark,

I send mine eyes out as for news
Of comfort that all these refuse,
Tidings of light or living air
From windward where the low clouds muse
And the sea blind and bare
Seems full of care.

So is it now as it was then,
And as men have been such are men,
There as I stood I seem to stand,
Here sitting chambered, and again
Feel spread on either hand
Sky, sea, and land.

As a queen taken and stripped and bound
Sat earth, discolored and discrowned ;
As a king's palace empty and dead
The sky was without light or sound ;
And on the summer's head
Were ashes shed,

Scarce wind enough was on the sea,
Scarce hope enough there moved in me,
To sow with live blown flowers of white
The green plain's sad serenity,
Or with stray thoughts of light
Touch my soul's sight.

By footless ways and sterile went
My thought unsatisfied, and bent
With blank unspeculative eyes
On the untracked sands of discontent
Where, watched of helpless skies,
Life hopeless lies.

East and west went my soul to find
Light, and the world was bare and blind
And the soil herbless where she trod
And saw men laughing scourge mankind,
Unsmitten by the rod
Of any God.

Out of time's blind old eyes were shed
Tears that were mortal, and left dead
The heart and spirit of the years,
And on man's fallen and helmless head
Time's disanointing tears
Fell cold as fears.

Hope flowering had but strength to bear
The fruitless fruitage of despair;
Grief trod the grapes of joy for wine,
Whereof love drinking unaware
Died as one undivine

And made no sign.
And soul and body dwelt apart;
And weary wisdom without heart
Stared on the dead round heaven and sighed,
"Is death too hollow as thou art,
Or as man's living pride"
And saying so died.

And my soul heard the songs and groans
That are about and under thrones,
And felt through all time's murmur thrill
Fate's old imperious semitones
That made of good and ill
One same tune still.

Then "Where is God? and where is aid?
Or what good end of these?" she said;
"Is there no God or end at all,
Nor reason with unreason weighed
Nor force to disenthral
Weak feet that fall?

"No light to lighten and no rod
To chasten men? Is there no God?"
So girt with anguish, iron-zoned,
Went my soul weeping as she trod
Between the men enthroned
And men that groaned.

O fool, that for brute cries of wrong
Heard not the grey glad mother's song
Ring response from the hills and waves,
But heard harsh noises all day long
Of spirits that were slaves
And dwelt in graves.

The wise word of the secret earth
Who knows what life and death are worth,
And how no help and no control
Can speed or stay things come to birth
Nor all world's wheels's that roll
Crush one born soul.

With all her tongues of life and death,
With all her bloom and blood and breath,
From all years dead and all things done,
In the ear of man the mother saith,
"There is no God, O son,
If thou be none."

So my soul sick with watching heard
That day the wonder of that word,
And as one springs out of a dream
Sprang, and the stagnant wells were stirred
Whence flows through gloom and gleam
Thought's soundless stream.

Out of pale cliff and sunburnt heath,
Out of the low sea curled beneath
In the land's bending arm embayed,
Out of all lives that thought hears breathe
Life within life inlaid,
Was answer made.

A multitudinous monotone
Of dust and flower and seed and stone,
In the deep sea-rock's mid-sea sloth,
In the live waters trembling zone,
In all men love and loathe,
One God at growth.

One forceful nature uncreate
That feeds itself with death and fate,

Evil and good, and change and time,
That within all men lies at wait
Till the hour shall bid them climb
And live sublime.

For all things come by fate to flower
At their unconquerable hour,
And time brings truth, and truth makes free,
And freedom fills time's veins with power,
As, brooding on that sea,
My thought filled me.

And the sun smote the clouds and slew
And from the sun the sea's breath blew,
And white waves laughed and turned and fled
The long green heaving sea-field through,
And on them overhead
The sky burnt red.

Like a furled flag that wind sets free,
On the swift summer-colored sea
Shook out the red lines of the light,
The live sun's standard, blown to lee
Across the live sea's white
And green delight.

And with divine triumphant awe
My spirit moved within me saw,
With burning passion of stretched eyes,
Clear as the light's own firstborn law,
In windless wastes of skies
Time's deep dawn rise.

MESSIDOR.

Put in the sickles and reap;
For the morning of harvest is red,
And the long large ranks of the corn
Colored and clothed as the morn
Stand thick in the fields and deep
For them that faint to be fed.
Let all that hunger and weep
Come hither, and who would have bread
Put in the sickles and reap.

Colored and clothed as the morn,
The grain grows ruddier than gold,
And the good strong sun is alight
In the mists of the day-dawn white,
And the crescent, a faint sharp horn,
In the fear of his face turns cold
As the snakes of the night-time that creep
From the flag of our faith unrolled.
Put in the sickles and reap.

In the mists of the day-dawn white
That roll round the morning star,
The large flame lightens and grows
Till the red gold harvest-rows,
Full-grown, are full of the light
As the spirits of strong men are,
Crying, Who shall slumber or sleep?
Who put back morning or mar?
Put in the sickles and reap.

Till the red-gold harvest-rows
For miles through shudder and shine
In the wind's breath, fed with the sun,
A thousaad spear-heads as one
Bowed as for battle to close
Line in rank against line
With place and station to keep
Till all men's hands at a sign
Put in the sickles and reap.

A thousand spear-heads as one
Wave as with swing of the sea
When the mid tide sways at its height
For the hour is for harvest or fight
In face of the just calm sun,
As the signal in season may be
And the lot in the helm may leap
When chance shall shake it; but ye,
Put in the sickles and reap.

For the hour is for harvest or fight
To clothe with raiment of red;
O men sore stricken of hours,
Lo, this one, is not it ours
To glean, to gather, to smite?
Let none make risk of his head
Within reach of the clean scythe-sweep,
When the people that lay as the dead
Put in the sickles and reap.

Lo, this one, is not it ours,
Now the ruins of dead things rattle
As dead men's bones in the pit,
Now the kings wax lean as they sit
Girt round with memories of powers,
With musters counted as cattle
And armies folded as sheep
Till the red blind husbandman battle
Put in the sickles and reap.

Now the kings wax lean as they sit,
The people grow strong to stand ;
The men they trod on and spat,
The dumb dread people that sat
As corpses cast in a pit,
Rise up with God at their hand,
And thrones are hurled on a heap,
And strong men, sons of the land,
Put in the sickles and reap.

The dumb dread people that sat
All night without screen for the night,
All day without food for the day,
They shall not give their harvest away,
They shall eat of its fruit and wax fat :
They shall see the desire of their sight,
Though the ways of the seasons be steep,
They shall climb with face to the light,
Put in the sickles and reap.

ODE ON THE INSURRECTION IN CANDIA.

STR. 1.

I LAID my laurel-leaf
At the white feet of grief,
Seeing how with covered face and plumeless wings,
With unreverted head
Veiled, as who mourns his dead,
Lay Freedom couched between the thrones of kings,
A wearied lion without lair,
And bleeding from base wounds, and vexed with alien air.

STR. 2.

Who was it, who, put poison to thy mouth,
Who lulled with craft or chant thy vigilant eyes,
O light of all men, lamp to north and south,
Eastward and westward, under all men's skies ?
For if thou sleep, we perish, and thy name
Dies with the dying of our ephemeral breath ;
And if the dust of death o'ergrows thy flame,
Heaven also is darkened with the dust of death.
If thou be mortal, if thou change or cease,
If thine hand fail, or thine eyes turn from Greece,
Thy first-born, and the first-fruits of thy fame,
God is no God, and man is moulded out of shame.

STR. 3.

Is there change in the secret skies,
In the sacred places that see
The divine beginning of things,
The weft of the web of the world ?
Is Freedom a worm that dies,
And God no God of the free ?
Is heaven like as earth with her kings
And time as a serpent curled
Round life as a tree ?

From the steel-bound snows of the north
From the mystic mother, the east,
From the sands of the fiery south,
From the low-lit clouds of the west,
A sound of a cry is gone forth ;
Arise, stand up from the feast,
Let wine be far from the mouth,
Let no man sleep or take rest,
Till the plague hath ceased.

Let none rejoice or make mirth
Till the evil thing be stayed,
Nor grief be lulled in the lute,
Nor hope be loud on the lyre ;
Let none be glad upon the earth.
O music of young man and maid,
O songs of the bride, be mute.
For the light of her eyes, her desire,
Is the soul dismayed.

It is not a land new-born
That is scourged of a stranger's hand,
That is rent and consumed with flame.
We have known it of old, this face
With the cheeks and the tresses torn,
With shame on the brow as a brand.
We have named it of old by name,
The land of the royallest race,
The most holy land.

STR. 4.

Had I words of fire,
Whose words are weak as snow
Were my heart a lyre
Whence all its love might flow

In the mighty modulations of desire,
In the notes wherewith man's passion worships woe ;

Could my song release
The thought weak words confine,
And my grief, O Greece,
Prove how it worships thine ;

It would move with pulse of war the limbs of peace
Till she flushed and trembled and became divine.

(Once she held for true
This truth of sacred strain ;
Though blood drip like dew
And life run down like rain,
It is better that war spare but one or two
Than that many live, and liberty be slain.)

Then with fierce increase
And bitter mother's mirth,
From the womb of peace,
A womb that yearns for birth,
As a man-child should deliverance come to Greece,
As a saviour should the child be born on earth.

STR. 5.

O that these my days had been
Ere white peace and shame were wed
Without torch or dancers' din
Round the unsacred marriage bed !
For of old the sweet-tongued law,
Freedom, clothed with all men's love,
Girt about with all men's awe,
With the wild war-eagle mated
The white breast of peace the dove,
And his ravenous heart abated
And his windy wings were furled
In an eyrie consecrated
Where the snakes of strife uncurled,
And her soul was soothed and sated
With the welfare of the world.

ANT. 1.

But now, close-clad with peace,
While war lays hand on Greece,
The kingdoms and their kings stand by to see ;
"Aha, we are strong," they say,
"We are sure, we are well," even they;
"And if we serve, what ails ye to be free ?
We are warm, clothed round with peace and shame ;
But ye lie dead and naked, dying for a name."

ANT. 2.

O kings and queens and nations miserable
O fools and blind, and full of sins and fears,
With these it is, with you it is not well ;
Ye have one hour, but these the immortal years.
These for a pang, a breath, a pulse o pain,
Have honor, while that honor on earth shall be ;
Ye for a little sleep and sloth shall gain
Scorn, while one man of all men born is free.
Even as the depth more deep than night o day,
The sovereign heaven that keeps its eldest way,
So without chance or change, so without stain,
The heaven of their high memories shall not wax nor wane.

ANT. 3.

As the soul on the lips of the dead
Stands poising her wings for flight,
A bird scarce quit of her prison,
But fair without form or flesh,
So stands over each man's head
A splendor of imminent light,
A glory of fame rearisen,
Of day rearisen afresh
From the hells of night.

In the hundred cities of Crete
Such glory was not of old,
Though her name was great upon earth
And her face was fair on the sea.
The words of her lips were sweet,
Her days were woven with gold,
Her fruits came timely to birth ;
So fair she was, being free,
Who is bought and sold.

So fair, who is fairer now
With her children dead at her side,
Unsceptered, unconsecrated,
Unapparelled, unhelped, unpitied,
With blood for gold on her brow,
Where the towery tresses divide ;
The goodly, the golden-gated,
Many-crowned, many-named, many citied,
Made like as a bride.

And these are the bridegroom's gifts ;
Anguish that straitens the breath.
Shame, and the weeping of mothers,
And the suckling dead at the breast,
White breast that a long sob lifts ;
And the dumb dead mouth, which saith,
"How long, and how long, my brothers?"
And wrath which endures not rest,
And the pains of death.

ANT. 4.

Ah, but would that men,
With eyelids purged by tears,
Saw, and heard again
With consecrated ears,
All the clamor, all the splendor, all the slain,
All the lights and sounds of war, the fates and fears ;

Saw far off aspire,
With crash of mine and gate,
From a single pyre
The myriad flames of fate,
Soul by soul transfigured in funereal fire,
Hate made weak by love, and love made strong by hate ;

Children without speech,
And many a nursing breast ;
Old men in the breach,
Where death sat down a guest ;
With triumphant lamentation made for each,
Let the world salute their ruin and their rest.

In one iron hour
The cresent flared and waned,
As from tower to tower,
Fire-scathed and sanguine-stained,
Death with flame in hand, an open blood-red flower,
Passed, and where it bloomed no bloom of life remained.

ANT. 5.

Hear thou, earth, the heavy-hearted
Weary nurse of waning races :
From the dust of years departed,
From obscure funereal places,
Raise again thy sacred head ;
Lift the light up of thine eyes ;
Where are they of all thy dead
That did more than these men dying
In their godlike Grecian wise ?
Not with garments rent and sighing,
Neither gifts of myrth and gold,
Shall their sons lament them lying.
Lest the fame of them wax cold ;
But with lives to lives replying,
And a worship from of old.

EPODE.

O sombre heart of earth and swoln with grief,
That in thy time wast as a bird for mirth,
Dim womb of life and many a seed and sheaf,
And full of changes, ancient heart of earth,
From grain and flower, from grass and every leaf,
Thy mysteries and thy multitudes of birth,
From hollow and hill, from vales and all thy springs,
From all shapes born and breath of all lips made.
From thunders, and the sound of winds and wings,
From light, and from the solemn sleep of shade,
From the full fountains of all living things,
Speak, that this plague be stayed.
Bear witness all the ways of death and life
If thou be with us in the world's old strife,
If thou be mother indeed,
And from these wounds that bleed
Gather in thy great breast the dews that fall,
And on thy sacred knees
Lull with mute melodies,
Mother, thy sleeping sons in death's dim hall.
For these thy sons, behold,
Sons of thy sons of old,
Bear witness if these be not as they were ;
If that high name of Greece
Depart, dissolve, decease
From mouths of men and memories like as air.
By the last milk that drips
Dead on the child's dead lips,
By old men's white unviolated hair,
By sweet unburied faces
That fill those red high places
Where death and freedom found one lion's lair,

By all the bloodred tears
That fill the chaliced years,
The vessels of the sacrament of time,
Wherewith, O thou most holy,
O Freedom, sure and slowly
Thy ministrant white hands cleanse earth of crime;
Though we stand off afar
Where slaves and slaveries are,
Among the chains and crowns of poisonous peace;
Though not the beams that shone
From rent Arcadion
Can melt her mists and bid her snows decrease;
Do thou with sudden wings
Darken the face of kings,
But turn again the beauty of thy brows on Greece;
Thy white and woundless brows,
Whereto her great heart bows;
Give her the glories of thine eyes to see;
Turn thee, O holiest head,
Toward all thy quick and dead,
For love's sake of the souls that cry for thee;
O love, O light, O flame,
By thine own Grecian name,
We call thee and we charge thee that all these be free.

Jan. 1867.

"NON DOLET."

It does not hurt. She looked along the knife
Smiling, and watched the thick drops mix and run
Down the sheer blade; not that which had been done
Could hurt the sweet sense of the Roman wife,
But that which was to do yet ere the strife
Could end for each for ever, and the sun:
Nor was the palm yet nor was peace yet won
While pain had power upon her husband's life.

It does not hurt, Italia. Thou art more
Than bride to bridegroom; how shalt thou not take
The gift love's blood has reddened for thy sake?
Was not thy lifeblood given for us before?
And if love's heartblood can avail thy need,
And thou not die, how should it hurt indeed?

EURYDICE.

TO VICTOR HUGO

Orpheus, the night is full of tears and cries,
And hardly for the storm and ruin shed
Can even thine eyes be certain of her head
Who never passed out of thy spirit's eyes,
But stood and shone before them in such wise
As when with love her lips and hands were fed,
And with mute mouth out of the dusty dead
Strove to make answer when thou bad'st her rise.

Yet viper-stricken must her lifeblood feel
The fang that stung her sleeping, the foul germ
Even when she wakes of hell's most poisonous worm,
Though now it writhe beneath her wounded heel.
Turn yet, she will not fade nor fly from thee;
Wait, and see hell yield up Eurydice.

AN APPEAL.

I.

ART thou indeed among these,
Thou of the tyrannous crew,
The kingdoms fed upon blood,
O queen from of old of the seas,
England, art thou of them too
That drink of the poisonous flood,
That hide under poisonous trees?

II.

Nay, thy name from of old,
Mother, was pure, or we dreamed;
Purer we held thee than this,
Purer fain would we hold;
So goodly a glory it seemed,
A fame so bounteous of bliss,
So more precious than gold.

III.

A praise so sweet in our ears,
That thou in the tempest of things
As a rock for a refuge shouldst stand,
In the bloodred river of tears
Poured forth for the triumph of kings;
A safeguard, a sheltering land,
In the thunder and torrent of years.

IV.

Strangers came gladly to thee,
Exiles, chosen of men,
Safe for thy sake in thy shade,
Sat down at thy feet and were free.
So men spake of thee then;
Now shall their speaking be stayed?
Ah, so let it not be!

V.

Not for revenge or affright,
Pride, or a tyrannous lust,
Cast from thee the crown of thy praise,
Mercy was thine in thy might;
Strong when thou wert, thou wert just;
Now, in the wrong-doing days,
Cleave thou, thou at least, to the right.

VI.

How should one charge thee, how sway,
Save by the memories that were?
Not thy gold nor the strength of thy ships,
Nor the might of thine armies at bay,
Made thee, mother, most fair;
But a word from republican lips
Said in thy name in thy day.

VII.

Hast thou said it, and hast thou forgot?
Is thy praise in thine ears as a scoff?
Blood of men guiltless was shed,
Children, and souls without spot,
Shed, but in places far off;
Let slaughter no more be, said
Milton; and slaughter was not.

VIII.

Was it not said of thee too,
Now, but now, by thy foes,
By the slaves that had slain their France
And thee would slay as they slew—
"Down with her walls that enclose
Freemen that eye us askance,
Fugitives, men that are true!"

IX.

This was thy praise or thy blame
From bondsman or freeman—to be
Pure from pollution of slaves,
Clean of their sins, and thy name
Bloodless, innocent, free;
Now if thou be not, thy waves
Wash not from off thee thy shame.

X.

Freeman he is not, but slave,
Whoso in fear for the State
Cries for surety of blood,
Help of gibbet and grave;
Neither is any land great
Whom, in her fear-stricken mood,
These things only can save.

XI.

Lo, how fair from afar,
Taintless of tyranny, stands
The mighty daughter, for years
Who trod the winepress of war;
Shines with immaculate hands;
Slays not a foe, neither fears;
Stains not peace with a scar.

XII.

Be not as tyrant or slave,
England; be not as these,
Thou that wert other than they.
Stretch out thine hand, but to save;
Put forth thy strength, and release;
Lest there arise, if thou slay,
Thy shame as a ghost from the grave.

November 20, 1867.

PERINDE AC CADAVER.

In a vision Liberty stood
By the childless charm-stricken bed
Where, barren of glory and good,
Knowing nought if she would not or would,
England slept with her dead.

Her face that the foam had whitened,
Her hands that were strong to strive,
Her eyes whence battle had lightened,
Over all was a drawn shroud tightened
To bind her asleep and alive.

She turned and laughed in her dream
With grey lips arid and cold;
She saw not the face as a beam
Burn on her, but only a gleam
Through her sleep as of new-stamped gold.

But the goddess, with terrible tears
In the light of her down-drawn eyes,
Spake fire in the dull sealed ears;
"Thou, sick with slumbers and fears,
Wilt thou sleep now indeed or arise?

"With dreams and with words and with light
Memories and empty desires
Thou hast wrapped thyself round all night;
Thou hast shut up thine heart from the right,
And warmed thee at burnt-out fires.

"Yet once if I smote at thy gate,
Thy sons would sleep not, but heard;
O thou that wast found so great,
Art thou smitten with folly or fate
That thy sons have forgotten my word?

"O Cromwell's mother, O breast
That suckled Milton! thy name
That was beautiful then, that was blest,
Is it wholly discrowned and deprest,
Trodden under by sloth into shame?

"Why wilt thou hate me and die?
For none can hate me and live.
What ill have I done to thee? why
Wilt thou turn from me fighting, and fly,
Who would follow thy feet and forgive?

"Thou hast seen me stricken, and said,
What is it to me? I am strong;
Thou hast seen me bowed down on my dead
And laughed and lifted thine head,
And washed thine hands of my wrong.

"Thou hast put out the soul of thy sight;
Thou hast sought to my foemen as friend,
To my traitors that kiss me and smite,
To the kingdoms and empires of night
That begin with the darkness, and end.

"Turn thee, awaken, arise,
With the light that is risen on the lands,
With the change of the fresh-colored skies;
Set thine eyes on mine eyes,
Lay thy hands in my hands."

She moved and mourned as she heard,
Sighed and shifted her place,
As the wells of her slumber were stirred
By the music and wind of the word,
Then turned and covered her face.

"Ah," she said in her sleep,
"Is my work not done with and done?
Is there corn for my sickle to reap?

And strange is the pathway and steep,
And sharp overhead is the sun.

"I have done thee service enough,
Loved thee enough in my day;
Now nor hatred nor love
Nor hardly remembrance thereof
Lives in me to lighten my way.

"And is it not well with us here?
Is change as good as is rest?
What hope should move me, or fear,
That eye should open or ear,
Who have long since won what is best?

"Where among us are such things
As turn men's hearts into hell?
Have we not queens without stings,
Scotched princes, and fangless kings?
Yea," she said, "we are well.

"We have filed the teeth of the snake
Monarchy, how should it bite?
Should the slippery slow thing wake,
It will not sting for my sake;
Yea," she said, "I do right."

So spake she, drunken with dreams,
Mad; but again in her ears
A voice as of storm-swelled streams
Spake; "No brave shame then redeems
Thy lusts of sloth and thy fears?

"Thy poor lie slain of thine hands,
Their starved limbs rot in thy sight;
As a shadow the ghost of thee stands
Among men living and lands,
And stirs not leftward or right.

"Freeman he is not, but slave,
Who stands not out on my side;
His own hand hollows his grave,
Nor strength is in me to save
Where strength is none to abide.

"Time shall tread on his name
That was written for honor of old,
Who hath taken in change for fame
Dust, and silver, and shame,
Ashes, and iron, and gold."

MONOTONES.

BECAUSE there is but one truth;
Because there is but one banner;
Because there is but one light;
Because we have with us our youth
Once, and one chance and one manner
Of service, and then the night;

Because we have found not yet
Any way for the world to follow
Save only that ancient way;
Whosoever forsake or forget,
Whose faith soever be hollow,
Whose hope soever grow grey;

Because of the watchwords of kings
That are many and strange and unwritten,
Diverse, and our watchword is one;
Therefore, though seven be the strings,
One string, if the harp be smitten,
Sole sounds, till the tune be done;

Sounds without cadence or change
In a weary monotonous burden,
Be the keynote of mourning or mirth;
Free, but free not to range;
Taking for crown and for guerdon
No man's praise upon earth;

Saying one sole word evermore,
In the ears of the charmed world saying,
Charmed by spells to its death;
One that chanted of yore
To a tune of the sword-sweep's playing
In the lips of the dead blew breath;

Therefore I set not mine hand
To the shifting of changed modulations
To the smiting of manifold strings,
While the thrones of the throned men stand
One song for the morning of nations,
One for the twilight of kings.

One chord, one word, and one way,
One hope as our law, one heaven,
Till slain be the great one wrong;
Till the people it could not slay,
Risen up, have for one star seven,
For a single, a sevenfold song.

THE OBLATION.

Ask nothing more of me sweet,
All I can give you I give
Heart of my heart, were it more.
More would be laid at your feet:
Love that should help you to live,
Song that should spur you to soar.

All things were nothing to give
Once to have sense of you more,
Touch you and taste of you sweet,
Think you and breathe you and live,
Swept of your wings as they soar,
Trodden by chance of your feet

I that have love and no more
Give you but love of you, sweet:
He that hath more, let him give;
He that hath wings, let him soar;
Mine is the heart at your feet
Here, that must love you to live.

A YEAR'S BURDEN.

Fire and wild light of hope and doubt and fear,
Wind of swift change, and clouds and hours that veer
As the storm shifts of the tempestuous year;
Cry wellaway, but well befall the right.

Hope sits yet hiding her war-wearied eyes,
Doubt sets her forehead earthward and denies,
But fear brought hand to hand with danger dies,
Dies and is burnt up in the fire of fight.

Hearts bruised with loss and eaten through with shame
Turn at the time's touch to devouring flame;
Grief stands as one that knows not her own name,
Nor if the star she sees bring day or night.

No song breaks with it on the violent air,
But shrieks of shame, defeat, and brute despair;
Yet something at the star's heart far up there
Burns as a beacon in our shipwrecked sight.

O strange fierce light of presage, unknown star,
Whose tongues shall tell us what thy secrets are,
What message trembles in thee from so far?
Cry wellaway, but well befall the right.

From shores laid waste across an iron sea
Where the waifs drift of hopes that were to be,
Across the red rolled foam we look for thee,
Across the fire we look up for the light.

From days laid waste across disastrous years,
From hopes cut down across a world of fears,
We gaze with eyes too passionate for tears,
Where faith abides though hope be put to flight.

Old hope is dead, the grey-haired hope grown blind
That talked with us of old things out of mind,
Dreams, deeds and men the world has left behind;
Yet, though hope die, faith lives in hope's despite.

Ay, with hearts fixed on death and hopeless hands
We stand about our banner while it stands
Above but one field of the ruined lands;
Cry wellaway, but well befall the right.

Though France were given for prey to bird and beast,
Though Rome were rent in twain of king and priest,
The soul of man, the soul is safe at least
That gives death life and dead men hands to smite.

Are ye so strong, O kings, O strong men? Nay,
Waste all ye will and gather all ye may,
Yet one thing is there that ye shall not slay,
Even thought, that fire nor iron can affright.

The woundless and invisible thought that goes
Free throughout time as north or south wind blows,
Far throughout space as east or west sea flows,
And all dark things before it are made bright.

Thy thought, thy word, O soul republican,
O spirit of life, O God whose name is man:
What sea of sorrows but thy sight shall span?
Cry wellaway, but well befall the right.

With all its coils crushed, all its rings uncurled,
The one most poisonous worm that soiled the world
Is wrenched from off the throat of man, and hurled
Into deep hell from empire's helpless height.

Time takes no more infection of it now;
Like a dead snake divided of the plough,
The rotten thing lies cut in twain; but thou,
Thy fires shall heal us of the serpent's bite.

Ay, with red cautery and a burning brand
Purge thou the leprous leaven of the land;
Take to thee fire, and iron in thine hand,
Till blood and tears have washed the soiled limbs white.

We have sinned against thee in dreams and wicked sleep;
Smite, we will shrink not; strike, we will not weep:
Let the heart feel thee; let thy wound go deep;
Cry wellaway, but well befall the right.

Wound us with love, pierce us with longing, make
Our souls thy sacrifices; turn and take
Our hearts for our sin-offerings lest they break,
And mould them with thine hands and give them might.

Then, when the cup of ills is drained indeed,
Will we come to thee with our wounds that bleed,
With famished mouths and hearts that thou shalt feed,
And see thee worshipped as the world's delight.

There shall be no more wars nor kingdoms won,
But in thy sight whose eyes are as the sun
All names shall be one name, all nations one,
All souls of men in man's one soul unite.

O sea whereon men labor, O great sea
That heaven seems one with, shall these things not be?
O earth, our earth, shall time not make us free?
Cry wellaway, but well befall the right.

EPILOGUE.

BETWEEN the wave-ridge and the strand
I let you forth in sight of land,
  Songs that with storm-crossed wings and eyes
  Strain eastward till the darkness dies;
Let signs and beacons fall or stand,
  And stars and balefires set and rise;
Ye, till some lordlier lyric hand
  Weave the beloved brows their crown,
At the beloved feet lie down.

  And whatsoever of life or light
Love hath to give you, what of might
  Or heart or hope is yours to live,
  I charge you take in trust to give
For very love's sake, in whose sight,
  Through poise of hours alternative
And seasons plumed with light or night,
  Ye live and move and have your breath,
  To sing with on the ridge of death.

I charge you faint not all night through
For love's sake that was breathed on you
  To be to you as wings and feet
  For travel, and as blood to heat
And sense of spirit to renew
  And bloom of fragrance to keep sweet
And fire of purpose to keep true
  The life, if life in such things be,
  That I would give you forth of me.

Out where the breath of war may bear,
Out in the rank moist reddened air
  That sounds and smells of death, and hath
  No light but death's upon its path
Seen through the black wind's tangled hair,
  I send you past the wild time's wrath
To find his face who bade you bear
  Fruit of his seed to faith and love,
  That he may take the heart thereof.

By day or night, by sea or street,
Fly till ye find and clasp his feet
  And kiss as worshippers who bring
  Too much love on their lips to sing,
But with hushed heads accept and greet
  The presence of some heavenlier thing
In the near air; so may ye meet
  His eyes, and droop not utterly
  For shame's sake at the light you see.

Not utterly struck spiritless
For shame's sake and unworthiness
  Of these poor forceless hands that come
  Empty, these lips that should be dumb,
This love whose seal can but impress
  These weak word-offerings wearisome
Whose blessings have not strength to bless
  Nor lightnings fire to burn up aught
  Nor smite with thunders of their thought.

One thought they have, even love; one light,
Truth, that keeps clear the sun by night;
  One chord, of faith as of a lyre;
  One heat, of hope as of a fire;
One heart, one music, and one might,
  One flame, one altar, and one choir;
And one man's living head in sight
  Who said, when all time's sea was foam,
  "Let there be Rome,"—and there was Rome.

As a star set in space for token
Like a live word of God's mouth spoken,
  Visible sound, light audible,
  In the great darkness thick as hell
A stanchless flame of love unsloken,
  A sign to conquer and compel,
A law to stand in heaven unbroken
  Whereby the sun shines, and where through
  Time's eldest empires are made new

So rose up on our generations
That light of the most ancient nations,
  Law, life, and light, on the world's way,
  The very God of very day,
The sun-god; from their star-like stations
  Far down the night in disarray
Fled, crowned with fires of tribulations,
  The suns of sunless years, whose light
  And life and law were of the night.

The naked kingdom quenched and stark
Drave with their dead things down the dark
  Helmless; their whole world, throne by throne,
  Fell, and its whole heart turned to stone.
Hopeless; their hands that touched our ark
  Withered; and lo, aloft, alone,
On time's white waters man's one bark,
  Where the red sundawn's open eye
  Lit the soft gulf of low green sky.

So for a season piloted
It sailed the sunlight, and struck red
With fire of dawn reverberate
The wan face of incumbent fate
That paused half pitying overhead
And almost had foregone the freight
Of those dark hours the next day bred
For shame, and almost had forsworn
Service of night for love of morn.

Then broke the whole night in one blow,
Thundering ; then all hell with one throe
Heaved, and brought forth beneath the stroke
Death ; and all dead things moved and woke
That the dawn's arrows had brought low,
At the great sound of night that broke
Thundering, and all the old world-wide woe ;
And under night's loud-sounding dome
Men sought her, and she was not Rome.

Still with blind hands and robes blood-wet
Night hangs on heaven, reluctant yet,
With black blood dripping from her eyes
On the soiled lintels of the skies,
With brows and lips that thirst and threat,
Heart-sick with fear lest the sun rise,
And aching with her fires that set,
And shuddering ere dawn bursts her bars,
Burns out with all her beaten stars.

In this black wind of war they fly
Now, ere that hour be in the sky
That brings back hope, and memory back,
And light and law to lands that lack ;
That spiritual sweet hour whereby
The bloody-handed night and black
Shall be cast out of heaven to die ;
Kingdom by kingdom, crown by crown,
The fires of darkness are blown down.

Yet heavy, grievous yet the weight
Sits on us of imperfect fate.
From wounds of other days and deeds
Still this day's breathing body bleeds ;
Still kings for fear and slaves for hate
Sow lives of men on earth like seeds
In the red soil they saturate ;
And we, with faces eastward set,
Stand sightless of the morning yet.

And many for pure sorrow's sake
Look back and stretch back hands to take
Gifts of night's giving, ease and sleep,
Flowers of night's grafting, strong to steep
The soul in dreams it will not break,
Songs of soft hours that sigh and sweep
Its lifted eyelids nigh to wake
With subtle plumes and lulling breath
That soothe its weariness to death.

And many, called of hope and pride,
Fall ere the sunrise from our side.
Fresh lights and rumors of fresh fames
That shift and veer by night like flames,
Shouts and blown trumpets, ghosts that glide
Calling, and hail them by dead names,
Fears, angers, memories, dreams divide
Spirit from spirit, and wear out
Strong hearts of men with hope and doubt.

Till time beget and sorrow bear
The soul-sick eyeless child despair,
That comes among us, mad and blind,
With counsels of a broken mind,
Tales of times dead and woes that were,
And, prophesying against mankind,
Shakes out the horror of her hair
To take the sunlight with its coils
And hold the living soul in toils.

By many ways of death and moods
Souls pass into their servitudes.
Their young wings weaken, plume by plume
Drops, and their eyelids gather gloom
And close against man's frauds and feuds,
And their tongues call they know not whom
To help in their vicissitudes ;
For many slaveries are, but one
Liberty, single as the sun.

One light, one law, that burns up strife,
And one sufficiency of life.
Self-stablished, the sufficing soul
Hears the loud wheels of changes roll,
Sees against man man bare the knife,
Sees the world severed, and is whole ;
Sees force take dowerless fraud to wife,
And fear from fraud's incestuous bed
Crawl forth and smite his father dead :

Sees death made drunk with war, sees time
Weave many-colored crime with crime,
State overthrown on ruining state,
And dares not be disconsolate.

Only the soul hath feet to climb,
Only the soul hath room to wait
Hath brows and eyes to hold sublime
Above all evil and all good,
All strength and all decrepitude.

She only, she since earth began,
The many-minded soul of man,
From one incognisable root
That bears such divers-colored fruit,
Hath ruled for blessing or for ban
The flight of seasons and pursuit ;
She regent, she republican,
With wide and equal eyes and wings
Broods on things born and dying things.

Even now for love or doubt of us
The hour intense and hazardous
Hangs high with pinions vibrating
Whereto the light and darkness cling
Dividing the dim season thus,
And shakes from one ambiguous wing
Shadow, and one is luminous
And day falls from it ; so the past
Torments the future to the last.

And we that cannot hear or see
The sounds and lights of liberty,
The witness of the naked God
That treads on burning hours unshod
With instant feet unwounded ; we
That can trace only where he trod
By fire in heaven or storm at sea,
Not know the very present whole
And naked nature of the soul ;

We that see wars and woes and kings,
And portents of enormous things,
Empires, and agonies, and slaves,
And whole flame of town-swallowing graves ;
That hear the harsh hours clap sharp wings
Above the roar of ranks like waves,
From wreck to wreck as the world swings ;
Know but that men there are who see
And hear things other far than we,

By the light sitting on their brows,
The fire wherewith their presence glows,
The music falling with their feet,
The sweet sense of a spirit sweet
That with their speech or motion grows
And breathes and burns men's hearts with heat ;
By these signs there is none but knows
Men who have life and grace to give,
Men who have seen the soul and live.

By the strength sleeping in their eyes,
The lips wheron their sorrow lies
Smiling, the lines of tears unshed,
The large divine look of one dead
That speaks out of the breathless skies
In silence, when the light is shed
Upon man's soul of memories ;
The supreme look that sets love free,
The look of stars and of the sea ;

By the strong patient godhead seen
Implicit in their mortal mien,
The conscience of a God held still
And thunders ruled by their own will
And fast-bound fires that might burn clean
This worldly air that foul things fill,
And the afterglow of what has been,
That, passing, shows us without word
What they have seen, what they have heard ;

By all these keen and burning signs
The spirit knows them and divines.
In bonds, in banishment, in grief,
Scoffed at and scourged with unbelief,
Foiled with false trusts and thwart designs,
Stripped of green days and hopes in leaf,
Their mere bare body of glory shines
Higher, and man gazing surelier sees
What light, what comfort is of these.

So I now gazing ; till the sense
Being set on fire of confidence
Strains itself sunward, feels out far
Beyond the bright and morning star,
Beyond the extreme wave's refluence,
To where the fierce first sunbeams are
Whose fire intolerant and intense
As birthpangs whence day burns to be
Parts breathless heaven from breathing sea.

I see not, know not, and am blest,
Master, who know that thou knowest,
Dear lord and leader, at whose hand
The first days and the last days stand,
With scars and crowns on head and breast,
That fought for love of the sweet land
Or shall fight in her latter quest ;
All the days armed and girt and crowned
Whose glories ring thy glory round.

Thou sawest, when all the world was blind,
The light that should be of mankind,
The very day that was to be ;
And how shalt thou not sometime see

Thy city perfect to thy mind
  Stand face to living face with thee,
And no miscrowned man's head behind ;
  The hearth of man, the human home,
  The central flame that shall be Rome?

As one that ere a June day rise
Makes seaward for the dawn and tries
  The water with delighted limbs
  That taste the sweet dark sea and swims
Right eastward under strengthening skies,
  And sees the gradual rippling rims
Of waves whence day breaks blossom-wise
  Take fire ere light peer well above,
  And laughs from all his heart with love ;

And softlier swimming with raised head
Feels the full flower of morning shed
  And fluent sunrise round him rolled
  That laps and laves his body bold
With fluctuant heaven in water's stead,
  And urgent through the growing gold
Strikes, and sees all the spray flash red,
  And his soul takes the sun, and yearns
  For joy wherewith the sea's heart burns ;

So the soul seeking through the dark
Heavenward, a dove without an ark,
  Transcends the unnavigable sea
  Of years that wear out memory ;
So calls a sunward-singing lark,
  In the ear of souls that should be free ;
So points them toward the sun for mark
  Who steer not for the stress of waves,
  And seek strange helmsmen, and are slaves.

For if the swimmer's eastward eye
Must see no sunrise—must put by
  The hope that lifted him and led
  Once, to have light about his head,
To see beneath the clear low sky
  The green foam-whitened wave wax red
And all the morning's banner fly—
  Then, as earth's helpless hopes go down,
  Let earth's self in the dark tides drown.

Yea, if no morning must behold
Man, other than were they now cold,
  And other deeds than past deeds done,
  Nor any near or far-off sun
Salute him risen and sunlike-souled,
  Free, bounddless, fearless, perfect, one,
Let man's world die like worlds of old.
And here in heaven's sight only be
The sole sun of a worldless sea.

POEMS AND BALLADS.

SECOND SERIES.

THE LAST ORACLE.

(A. D. 361.)

εἰπατε τῷ βασιλῆϊ, χαμαὶ πέσε δαίδαλος αὐλά·
οὐκετι Φοῖβος ἔχει καλύβαν, οὐ μάντιδα δάφνην,
οὐ παγὰν λαλέουσαν· ἀπέσβετο καὶ λάλον ὕδωρ.

YEARS have risen and fallen in darkness or in twilight,
Ages waxed and waned that knew not thee nor thine,
While the world sought light by night and sought not thy light,
Since the sad last pilgrim left thy dark mid shrine.
Dark the shrine and dumb the fount of song thence welling,
Save for words more sad than tears of blood, that said:
Tell the king, on earth has fallen the glorious dwelling,
And the watersprings that spake are quenched and dead.
Not a cell is left the God, no roof, no cover;
In his hand the prophet laurel flowers no more.
And the great king's high sad heart, thy true last lover,
Felt thine answer pierce and cleave it to the core.
And he bowed down his hopeless head
In the drift of the wild world's tide,
And dying, *Thou hast conquered,* he said,
Galilean; he said it, and died.
And the world that was thine and was ours
When the Graces took hands with the Hours
Grew cold as a winter wave
In the wind from a wide-mouthed grave,
As a gulf wide open to swallow
The light that the world held dear.
O father of all of us, Paian, Apollo,
Destroyer and healer, hear!

Age on age thy mouth was mute, thy face was hidden,
And the lips and eyes that loved thee blind and dumb;
Song forsook their tongues that held thy name forbidden,
Light their eyes that saw the strange God's kingdom come.
Fire for light and hell for heaven and psalms for pæans
Filled the clearest eyes and lips most sweet of song,
When for chant of Greeks the wail of Galileans
Made the whole world moan with hymns of wrath and wrong.
Yea, not yet we see thee, father, as they saw thee.
They that worshipped when the world was theirs and thine,
They whose words had power by thine own power to draw thee
Down from heaven till earth seemed more than heaven divine.
For the shades are about us that hover
When darkness is half withdrawn
And the skirts of the dead night cover
The face of the live new dawn.
For the past is not utterly past
Though the word on its lips be the last,
And the time be gone by with its creed
When men were as beasts that bleed,
As sheep or as swine that wallow,
In the shambles of faith and of fear.
O father of all of us, Paian, Apollo,
Destroyer and healer, hear!

Yet it may be, lord and father, could we know it,
We that love thee for our darkness shall have light
More than ever prophet hailed of old or poet
Standing crowned and robed and sovereign in thy sight.
To the likeness of one God their dreams enthralled thee,
Who wast greater than all Gods that waned and grew;
Son of God the shining son of Time they called thee,
Who wast older, O our father, than they knew.
For no thought of man made Gods to love or honor
Ere the song within the silent soul began,
Nor might earth in dream or deed take heaven upon her

Till the word was clothed with speech by lips of man.
And the word and the life wast thou,
The spirit of man and the breath;
And before thee the Gods that bow
Take life as thine hands and death.
For these are as ghosts that wane,
That are gone in an age or twain;
Harsh, merciful, passionate, pure,
They perish, but thou shalt endure;
Be their life as the swan's or the swallow,
They pass as the flight of a year.
O father of all of us, Paian, Apollo,
Destroyer and healer, hear!

Thou the word, the light, the life, the breath, the glory,
Strong to help and heal, to lighten and to slay,
Thine is all the song of man, the world's whole story;
Not of morning and of evening is thy day.
Old and younger Gods are buried or begotten
From uprising to downsetting of thy sun,
Risen from eastward, fallen to westward and forgotten,
And their springs are many, but their end is one.
Divers births of godheads find one death appointed,
As the soul whence each was born makes room for each;
God by God goes out, discrowned and disanointed,
But the soul stands fast that gave them shape and speech.
Is the sun yet cast out of heaven?
Is the song yet cast out of man?
Life that had song for its leaven
To quicken the blood that ran
Through the veins of the songless years
More bitter and cold than tears,
Heaven that had thee for its one
Light, life, word, witness, O sun,
Are they soundless and sightless and hollow,
Without eye, without speech, without ear?
O father of all of us, Paian, Apollo,
Destroyer and healer, hear!

Time arose and smote thee silent at his warning,
Change and darkness fell on men that fell from thee;
Dark thou satest, veiled with light, behind the morning,
Till the soul of man should lift up eyes and see.
Till the blind mute soul get speech again and eyesight,
Man may worship not the light of life within;
In his sight the stars whose fires grow dark in thy sight
Shine as sunbeams on the night of death and sin.
Time again is risen with mightier word of warning,
Change hath blown again a blast of louder breath;
Clothed with clouds and stars and dreams that melt in morning,
Lo, the Gods that ruled by grace of sin and death!
They are conquered, they break, they are stricken,
Whose might made the whole world pale;
They are dust that shall rise not or quicken
Though the world for their death's sake wail.
As a hound on a wild beast's trace,
So time as their godhead in chase;
As wolves when the hunt makes head,
They are scattered, they fly, they are fled:
They are fled beyond hail, beyond hollo.
And the cry of the chase, and the cheer.
O father of all of us, Paian, Apollo,
Destroyer and healer, hear!
Day by day thy shadow shines in heaven beholden,
Even the sun, the shining shadow of thy face:
King, the ways of heaven before thy feet grow golden;
God, the soul of earth is kindled with thy grace.
In thy lips the speech of man whence Gods were fashioned,
In thy soul the thought that makes them and unmakes;
By thy light and heat incarnate and impassioned,
Soul to soul of man gives light for light and takes.
As they knew thy name of old time could we know it,
Healer called of sickness, slayer invoked of wrong,
Light of eyes that saw thy light, God, king, priest, poet,
Song should bring thee back to heal us with thy song.

For thy kingdom is past not away,
Nor thy power from the place thereof hurled;
Out of heaven they shall cast not the day,
They shall cast not out song from the world.
By the song and the light they give
We know thy works that they live;
With the gift thou hast given us of speech
We praise, we adore, we beseech,
We arise at thy bidding and follow,
We cry to thee, answer, appear,
O father of all of us, Paian, Apollo,
Destroyer and healer, hear!

IN THE BAY.

I.

Beyond the hollow sunset, ere a star
Take heart in heaven from eastward, while the west
Fulfilled of watery resonance and rest,
Is as a port with clouds for harbor bar
To fold the fleet in of the winds from far
That stir no plume now of the bland sea's breast;

II.

Above the soft sweep of the breathless bay
Southwestward, far past flight of night and day,
Lower than the sunken sunset sinks, and higher
Than dawn can freak the front of heaven with fire,
My thought with eyes and wings made wide makes way
To find the place of souls that I desire.

III.

If any place for any soul there be,
Disrobed and disentrammelled; if the might,
The fire and force that filled with ardent light
The souls whose shadow is half the light we see,
Survive and be suppressed not of the night;
This hour should show what all day hid from me.

IV.

Night knows not, neither is it shown to day,
By sunlight nor by starlight is it shown,
Nor to the full moon's eve nor footfall known,
Their world's untrodden and unkindled way.
Nor is the breath nor music of it blown
With sounds of winter or with winds of May.

V.

But here, where light and darkness reconciled
Hold earth between them as a weanling child
Between the balanced hands of death and birth,
Even as they held the new-born shape of earth
When first life trembled in her limbs and smiled,
Here hope might think to find what hope were worth.

VI.

Past Hades, past Elysium, past the long
Slow smooth strong lapse of Lethe—past the toil
Wherein all souls are taken as a spoil,
The Stygian web of waters—if your song
Be quenched not, O our brethren, but be strong
As ere ye too shook off our temporal coil;

VII.

If yet these twain survive your worldly breath,
Joy trampling sorrow, life devouring death,
If perfect life possess your life all through
And like your words your souls be deathless too,
To-night, of all whom night encompasseth,
My soul would commune with one soul of you.

VIII.

Above the sunset might I see thine eyes
That were above the sundawn in our skies,
Son of the songs of morning,—thine that were
First lights to lighten that rekindling air
Where through men saw the front of England rise
And heard thine loudest of the lyre-notes there—

IX.

If yet thy fire have not one spark the less,
O Titan, born of her a Titaness,
Across the sunrise and the sunset's mark
Send of thy lyre one sound, thy fire one spark,
To change this face of our unworthiness,
Across this hour dividing light from dark.

X.

To change this face of our chill time, that hears
No song like thine of all that crowd its ears,
Of all its lights that lighten all day long

Sees none like thy most fleet and fiery sphere's
Outlightening Sirius—in its twilight throng
No thunder and no sunrise like thy song.

XI.

Hath not the sea-wind swept the sea-line bare
To pave with stainless fire through stainless air
A passage for thine heavenlier feet to tread
Ungrieved of earthly floor work? hath it spread
No covering splendid as the sun-god's hair
To veil or to reveal thy lordlier head?

XII.

Hath not the sunset shown across the sea
A way majestical enough for thee?
What hour save this should be thine hour—and mine,
If thou have care of any less divine
Than thine own soul; if thou take thought of me,
Marlowe, as all my soul takes thought of thine?

XIII.

Before the moon's face as before the sun
The morning star and evening star are one
For all men's lands as England. O, if night
Hang hard upon us,—ere our day take flight,
Shed thou some comfort from thy day long done
On us pale children of the latter light!

XIV.

For surely, brother and master and lord and king,
Where'er thy footfall and thy face make spring
In all souls' eyes that meet thee wheresoe'er,
And have thy soul for sunshine and sweet air—
Some late love of thine old live land should cling,
Some living love of England, round thee there.

XV.

Here from her shore across her sunniest sea
My soul makes question of the sun for thee,
And waves and beams make answer. When thy feet
Made her ways flowerier and their flowers more sweet
With childlike passage of a god to be,
Like spray these waves cast off her foemen's fleet.

XVI.

Like foam they flung it from her, and like weed
Its wrecks were washed from scornful shoal to shoal,
From rock to rock reverberate; and the whole
Sea laughed and lightened with a deathless deed
That sowed our enemies in her field for seed
And made her shores fit harborage for thy soul.

XVII.

Then in her green south fields, a poor man's child,
Thou hast thy short sweet fill of half-blown joy,
That ripens all of us for time to cloy
With full-blown pain and passion; ere the wild
World caught thee by the fiery heart, and smiled
To make so swift end of the godlike boy.

XVIII.

For thou, if ever godlike foot there trod
These fields of ours, wert surely like a god.
Who knows what splendor of strange dreams was shed
With sacred shadow and glimmer of gold and red
From hallowed windows, over stone and sod,
On thine unbowed bright insubmissive head?

XIX.

The shadow stayed not, but the splendor stays.
Our brother, till the last of English days.
No day nor night on English earth shall be
For ever, spring nor summer, Junes nor Mays,
But somewhat as a sound or gleam of thee
Shall come on us like morning from the sea.

XX.

Like sunrise never wholly risen, nor yet
Quenched; or like sunset never wholly set,
A light to lighten as from living eyes
The cold unlit close lids of one that lies
Dead, or a ray returned from death's far skies
To fire us living lest our lives forget.

XXI.

For in that heaven what light of lights may be,
What splendor of what stars, what spheres of flame

Sounding, that none may number nor may name,
We know not, even thy brethren; yea, not we
Whose eyes desire the light that lightened thee,
Whose ways and thine are one way and the same.

XXII.

But if the riddles that in sleep we read,
And trust them not, be flattering truth indeed,
As he that rose our mightiest called them,—he,
Much higher than thou as thou much higher than we—
There, might we say, all flower of all our seed,
All singing souls are as one sounding sea.

XXIII.

All those that here were of thy kind and kin,
Beside thee and below thee, full of love,
Full-souled for song,—and one alone above
Whose only light folds all your glories in—
With all birds' notes frum nightingale to dove
Fill the world whither we too fain would win.

XXIV.

The world that sees in heaven the sovereign light
Of sunlike Shakespeare, and the fiery night
Whose stars were watched of Webster; and beneath,
The twin-souled brethren of the single wreath,
Grown in king's gardens, plucked from pastoral heath,
Wrought with all flowers for all men's heart's delight.

XXV.

And that fixed fervor, iron-red like Mars,
In the mid moving tide of tenderer stars,
That burned on loves and deeds the darkest done,
Athwart the incestuous prisoner's bride-house bars;
And thine, most highest of all their fires but one,
Our morning star, sole risen before the sun.

XXVI.

And one light risen since theirs to run such race
Thou has seen, O Phoshor, from thy pride of place.
Thou hast seen Shelley, him that was to thee
As light to fire or dawn to lightning; me,
Me likewise, O our brother, shall thou see,
And I behold thee, face to glorious face?

XXVII.

You twain the same swift year of manhood swept.
Down the steep darkness, and our father wept.
And from the gleam of Apollonian tears
A holier aureole rounds your memories, kept
Most fervent-fresh of all the singing spheres,
And April-colored through all months and years.

XXVIII.

You twain fate spared not half your fiery span;
The longer date fulfils the lesser man
Ye from beyond the dark dividing date
Stand smiling, crowned as gods with foot on fate.
For stronger was your blessing than his ban,
And earliest whom he struck, he struck too late.

XXIX.

Yet love and loathing, faith and unfaith yet
Bind less to greater souls in unison,
And one desire that makes three spirits as one
Takes great and small as in one spiritual net
Woven out of hope toward what shall yet be done
Ere hate or love remember or forget.

XXX.

Woven out of faith and hope and love too great
To bear the bonds of life and death and fate:
Woven out of love and hope and faith too dear
To take the print of doubt and change and fear:
And interwoven with lines of wrath and hate
Blood-red with soils of many a sanguine year.

XXXI.

Who cannot hate, can love not; if he grieve,
His tears are barren as the unfruitful rain
That rears no harvest from the green sea's plain,

And as thorns crackling this man's laugh is vain.
Nor can belief touch, kindle, smite, reprieve
His heart who has not heart to disbelieve.

XXXII.

But you, most perfect in your hate and love,
Our great twin-spirited brethren; you that stand
Head by head glittering, hand made fast in hand,
And underfoot the fang-drawn worm that strove
To wound you living; from so far above,
Look love, not scorn, on ours that was our land.

XXXIII.

For love we lack, and help and heat and light
To clothe us and to comfort us with might.
What help is ours to take or give? but ye—
O, more than sunrise to the blind cold sea,
That wailed aloud with all her waves all night,
Much more, being much more glorious, should you be.

XXXIV.

As fire to frost, as ease to toil, as dew
To flowerless fields, as sleep to slackening pain,
As hope to souls long weaned from hope again
Returning, or as blood revived anew
To dry-drawn limbs and every pulseless vein,
Even so toward us should no man be but you.

XXXV.

One rose before the sunrise was, and one
Before the sunset, lovelier than the sun.
And now the heaven is dark and bright and loud
With wind and starry drift and moon and cloud,
And night's cry rings in straining sheet and shroud,
What help is ours if hope like yours be none?

XXXVI.

O well-beloved, our brethren, if ye be,
Then are we not forsaken. This kind earth
Made fragrant once for all time with your birth,
And bright for all men with your love, and worth
The clasp and kiss and wedlock of the sea,
Were not your mother if not your brethren we.

XXXVII.

Because the days were dark with gods and kings
And in time's hand the old hours of time as rods,
When force and fear set hope and faith at odds,
Ye failed not nor abased your plume-plucked wings;
And we that front not more disastrous things,
How should we fail in face of kings and gods?

XXXVIII.

For now the deep dense plumes of night are thinned
Surely with winnowing of the glimmering wind
Whose feet are fledged with morning; and the breath
Begins in heaven that sings the dark to death.
And all the night wherein men groaned and sinned
Sickens at heart to hear what sundawn saith.

XXXIX.

O first-born sons of hope and fairest, ye
Whose prows first clove the thought-unsounded sea
Whence all the dark dead centuries rose to bar
The spirit of man lest truth should make him free,
The sunrise and the sunset, seeing one star,
Take heart as we to know you that ye are.

XL.

Ye rise not and ye set not; we that say
Ye rise and set like hopes that set and rise
Look yet but seaward from a land-locked bay;
But where at last the sea's line is the sky's
And truth and hope one sunlight in your eyes,
No sunrise and no sunset marks their day.

A FORSAKEN GARDEN.

In a coign of the cliff between lowland and highland,
At the sea-down's edge between windward and lee,

Walled round with rocks as an inland island,
The ghost of a garden fronts the sea.
A girdle of brushwood and thorn encloses
The steep square slope of the blossomless bed
Where the weeds that grew green from the graves of its roses
Now lie dead.

The fields fall southward, abrupt and broken,
To the low last edge of the long lone land.
If a step should sound or a word be spoken,
Would a ghost not rise at the strange guest's hand?
So long have the gray bare walks lain guestless,
Through branches and briers if a man make way,
He shall find no life but the sea-wind's, restless
Night and day.

The dense hard passage is blind and stifled
That crawls by a track none turn to climb
To the strait waste place that the years have rifled
Of all but the thorns that are touched not of time.
The thorns he spares when the rose is taken;
The rocks are left when he wastes the plain.
The wind that wanders, the weeds wind-shaken,
These remain.

Not a flower to be prest of the foot that falls not;
As the heart of a dead man the seed-plots are dry;
From the thicket of thorns whence the nightingale calls not,
Could she call, there were never a rose to reply.
Over the meadows that blossom and wither
Rings but the note of a sea-bird's song;
Only the sun and the rain come hither
All year long.

The sun burns sere and the rain dishevels
One gaunt bleak blossom of scentless breath.
Only the wind here hovers and revels
In a round where life seems barren as death.
Here there was laughing of old, there was weeping,
Haply, of lovers none ever will know,
Whose eyes went seaward a hundred sleeping
Years ago.

Heart handfast in heart as they stood, 'Look thither,'
Did he whisper? 'Look forth from the flowers to the sea;
For the foam-flowers endure when the rose-blossoms wither,
And men that love lightly may die—but we?'
And the same wind sang and the same waves whitened,
And or ever the garden's last petals were shed,
In the lips that had whispered, the eyes that had lightened,
Love was dead.

Or they loved their life through, and then went whither?
And were one to the end—but what end who knows?
Love deep as the sea as a rose must wither,
As the rose-red seaweed that mocks the rose.
Shall the dead take thought for the dead to love them?
What love was ever as deep as a grave?
They are loveless now as the grass above them
Or the wave.

All are at one now, roses and lovers,
Not known of the cliffs and the fields and the sea.
Not a breath of the time that has been hovers
In the air now soft with a summer to be.
Not a breath shall there sweeten the seasons hereafter
Of the flowers or the lovers that laugh now or weep,
When as they that are free now of weeping and laughter
We shall sleep.

Here death may deal not again forever;
Here change may come not till all change end.
From the graves they have made they shall rise up never,
Who have left nought living to ravage and rend.
Earth, stones, and thorns of the wild ground growing,
While the sun and the rain live, these shall be;
Till a last wind's breath upon all these blowing
Roll the sea.

Till the slow sea rise and the sheer cliff crumble,
Till terrace and meadow the deep gulfs drink,
Till the strength of the waves of the high tides humble
The fields that lessen, the rocks that shrink,
Here now in his triumph where all things falter,
Stretched out on the spoils that his own hand spread,
As a god self-slain on his own strange altar,
Death lies dead.

RELICS.

THIS flower that smells of honey and the sea,
White laurustine, seems in my hand to be
A white star made of memory long ago
Lit in the heaven of dear times dead to me.

A star out of the skies love used to know
Here held in hand, a stray left yet to show
What flowers my heart was full of in the days
That are long since gone down dead memory's flow.

Dead memory that revives on doubtful ways,
Half hearkening what the buried season says
Out of the world of the unapparent dead
Where the lost Aprils are, and the lost Mays.

Flower, once I knew thy star-white brethren bred
Nigh where the last of all the land made head
Against the sea, a keen-faced promontory,
Flowers on salt wind and sprinkled sea-dews fed.

Their hearts were glad of the free place's glory;
The wind that sang them all his stormy story
Had talked all winter to the sleepless spray,
And as the sea's their hues were hard and hoary.

Like things born of the sea and the bright day,
They laughed out at the years that could not slay,
Live sons and joyous of unquiet hours,
And stronger than all storms that range for prey.

And in the close indomitable flowers
A keen-edged odor of the sun and showers
Was as the smell of the fresh honeycomb
Made sweet for mouths of none but paramours.

Out of the hard green wall of leaves that clomb
They showed like windfalls of the snow-soft foam,
Or feathers from the weary south-wind's wing,
Fair as the spray that it came shoreward from.

And thou, as white, what word hast thou to bring?
If my heart hearken, whereof wilt thou sing?
For some sign surely thou too hast to bear,
Some word far south was taught thee of the spring.

White like a white rose, not like these that were
Taught of the wind's mouth and the winter air,
Poor tender thing of soft Italian bloom,
Where once thou grewest, what else for me grew there.

Born in what spring and on what city's tomb,
By whose hand wast thou reached, and plucked for whom?
There hangs about thee, could the soul's sense tell,
An odor as of love and of love's doom.

Of days more sweet than thou wast sweet to smell,
Of flower-soft thoughts that came to flower and fell,
Of loves that lived a lily's life and died,
Of dreams now dwelling where dead roses dwell.

O white birth of the golden mountain-side
That for the sun's love makes its bosom wide
At sunrise, and with all its woods and flowers
Takes in the morning to its heart of pride!

Thou hast a word of that one land of ours,
And of the fair town called of the fair towers,
A word for me of my San Gimignan,
A word of April's greenest-girdled hours.

Of the breached walls whereon the wall-flowers ran
Called of Saint Fina, breachless now of man,
Though time with soft feet break them stone by stone,
Who breaks down hour by hour his own reign's span.

Of the cliff overcome and overgrown
That all that flowerage clothed as flesh clothes bone,
That garment of acacias made for May,
Whereof here lies one witness overblown.

The fair brave trees with all their flowers at play,
How king-like they stood up into the day!
How sweet the day was with them, and the night!
Such words of message have dead flowers to say.

This that the winter and the wind made bright,
And this that lived upon Italian light,
Before I throw them and these words away,
Who knows but I what memories too take flight?

AT A MONTH'S END.

The night last night was strange and shaken:
More strange the change of you and me.
Once more, for the old love's love forsaken,
We went out once more toward the sea.

For the old love's love-sake dead and buried,
One last time, one more and no more,
We watched the waves set in, the serried
Spears of the tide storming the shore.

Hardly we saw the high moon hanging,
Heard hardly through the windy night
Far waters ringing, low reefs clanging,
Under wan skies and waste white light.

With chafe and change of surges chiming,
The clashing channels rocked and rang
Large music, wave to wild wave timing,
And all the choral water sang.

Faint lights fell this way, that way floated,
Quick sparks of sea-fire keen like eyes
From the rolled surf that flashed, and noted
Shores and faint cliffs and bays and skies.

The ghost of sea that shrank up sighing
At the sand's edge, a short sad breath
Trembling to touch the goal, and dying
With weak heart heaved up once in death—

The rustling sand and shingle shaken
With light sweet touches and small sound—
These could not move us, could not waken
Hearts to look forth, eyes to look round.

Silent we went an hour together,
Under gray skies by waters white.
Our hearts were full of windy weather,
Clouds and blown stars and broken light.

Full of cold clouds and moonbeams drifted
And streaming storms and straying fires,
Our souls in us were stirred and shifted
By doubts and dreams and foiled desires.

Across, aslant, a scudding sea-mew
Swam, dipped, and dropped, and grazed the sea:
And one with me I could not dream you;
And one with you I could not be.

As the white wing the white wave's fringes
Touched and slid over and flashed past—
As a pale cloud a pale flame tinges
From the moon's lowest light and last—

As a star feels the sun and falters,
Touched to death by diviner eyes—
As on the old gods' untended altars
The old fire of withered worship dies—

(Once only, once the shrine relighted
Sees the last fiery shadow shine,
Last shadow of flame and faith benighted,
Sees falter and flutter and fail the shrine)

So once with fiery breath and flying
Your winged heart touched mine and went,
And the swift spirits kissed, and sighing,
Sundered and smiled and were content.

That only touch, that feeling only,
Enough we found, we found too much;
For the unlit shrine is hardly lonely
As one the old fire forgets to touch.

Slight as the sea's sight of the sea-mew,
Slight as the sun's sight of the star:
Enough to show one must not deem you
For love's sake other than you are.

Who snares and tames with fear and danger
A bright beast of a fiery kin,

Only to mar, only to change her
Sleek supple soul and splendid skin?

Easy with blows to mar and maim her,
Easy with bonds to bind and bruise;
What profit, if she yield her tamer
The limbs to mar, the soul to lose?

Best leave or take the perfect creature,
Take all she is or leave complete;
Transmute you will not form or feature,
Change feet for wings or wings for feet.

Strange eyes, new limbs, can no man give her;
Sweet is the sweet thing as it is.
No soul she hath, we see, to outlive her;
Hath she for that no lips to kiss?

So may one read his weird, and reason,
And with vain drugs assuage no pain.
For each man in his loving season
Fools and is fooled of these in vain.

Charms that allay not any longing,
Spells that appease not any grief,
Time brings us all by handfuls, wronging
All hurts with nothing of relief.

Ah, too soon shot, the fool's bolt misses!
What help? the world is full of loves;
Night after night of running kisses,
Chirp after chirp of changing doves.

Should Love disown or disesteem you
For loving one man more or less?
You could not tame your light white sea-mew,
Nor I my sleek black pantheress.

For a new soul let whoso please pray,
We are what life made us, and shall be.
For you the jungle and me the sea-spray,
And south for you and north for me.

But this one broken foam-white feather
I throw you off the hither wing,
Splashed stiff with sea-scurf and salt weather,
This song for sleep to learn and sing—

Sing in your ear when, daytime over,
You, couched at long length on hot sand
With some sleek sun-discolored lover,
Wince from his breath as from a brand:

Till the acrid hour aches out and ceases,
And the sheathed eyeball sleepier swims,
The deep flank smooths its dimpling creases,
And passion loosens all the limbs;

Till dreams of sharp gray north-sea weather
Fall faint upon your fiery sleep,
As on strange sands a strayed bird's feather
The wind may choose to lose or keep.

But I, who leave my queen of panthers,
As a tired honey-heavy bee
Gilt with sweet dust from gold-grained anthers
Leaves the rose-chalice, what for me?

From the ardors of the chaliced centre,
From the amorous anthers' golden grime,
That scorch and smutch all wings that enter,
I fly forth hot from honey-time.

But as to a bee's gilt thighs and winglets
The flower-dust with the flower-smell clings;
As a snake's mobile rampant ringlets
Leave the sand marked with print of rings;

So to my soul in surer fashion
Your savage stamp and savor hangs;
The print and perfume of old passion,
The wild-beast mark of panther's fangs.

SESTINA.

I SAW my soul at rest upon a day
As the bird sleeping in the nest of night,
Among soft leaves that give the starlight way
To touch its wings but not its eyes with light;
So that it knew as one in visions may,
And knew not as men waking, of delight.

This was the measure of my soul's delight;
It had no power of joy to fly by day,
Nor part in the large lordship of the light;
But in a secret moon-beholden way
Had all its will of dreams and pleasant night,
And all the love and life that sleepers may.

But such life's triumph as men waking may
It might not have to feed its faint delight
Between the stars by night and sun by day,
Shut up with green leaves and a little light;
Because its way was as a lost star's way,
A world's not wholly known of day or night.

All loves and dreams and sounds and gleams of night
Made it all music that such minstrels may,
And all they had they gave it of delight;
But in the full face of the fire of day
What place shall be for any starry light,
What part of heaven in all the wide sun's way?

Yet the soul woke not, sleeping by the way,
Watched as a nursling of the large-eyed night,
And sought no strength nor knowledge of the day,
Nor closer touch conclusive of delight,
Nor mightier joy nor truer than dreamers may,
Nor more of song than they, nor more of light.
For who sleeps once and sees the secret light
Whereby sleep shows the soul a fairer way
Between the rise and rest of day and night,
Shall care no more to fare as all men may,
But he is place of pain or of delight,
There shall he dwell, beholding night as day.

Song, have thy day and take thy fill of light
Before the night be fallen across thy way;
Sing while he may, man hath no long delight.

THE YEAR OF THE ROSE.

From the depths of the green garden-closes
Where the summer in darkness dozes
Till autumn pluck from his hand
An hour-glass that holds not a sand;
From the maze that a flower-belt encloses
To the stones and sea-grass on the strand
How red was the reign of the roses
Over the rose-crowned land!

The year of the rose is brief;
From the first blade blown to the sheaf,
From the thin green leaf to the gold,
It has time to be sweet and grow old,
To triumph and leave not a leaf
For witness in winter's sight
How lovers once in the light
Would mix their breath with its breath,
And its spirit was quenched not of night,
As love is subdued not of death.

In the red-rose land not a mile
Of the meadows from stile to stile,
Of the valleys from stream to stream,
But the air was a long sweet dream
And the earth was a sweet wide smile
Red-mouthed of a goddess, returned
From the sea which had borne her and burned,
That with one swift smile of her mouth
Looked full on the north as it yearned,
And the north was more than the south.

For the north, when winter was long,
In his heart had made him a song,
And clothed it with wings of desire,
And shod it with shoon as of fire,
To carry the tale of his wrong
To the south-west wind by the sea,
That who might bear it but he
To the ears of the goddess unknown
Who waits till her time shall be
To take the world for a throne?

In the earth beneath, and above
In the heaven where her name is love,
She warms with light from her eyes
The seasons of life as they rise,
And her eyes are as eyes of a dove,
But the wings that lift her and bear
As an eagle's, and all her hair
As fire by wind's breath curled,
And her passage is song through the air,
And her presence is spring through the world

So turned she northward and came,
And the white-thorn land was aflame
With the fires that were shed from her feet,
That the north, by her love made sweet,
Should be called by a rose-red name;
And a murmur was heard as of doves,
And a music beginning of loves
In the light that the roses made,
Such light as the music loves.
The music of man with maid.

But the days drop one upon one,
And a chill soft wind is begun
In the heart of the rose-red maze
That weeps for the roseleaf days
And the reign of the rose undone
That ruled so long in the light,
And by spirit, and not by sight,
Through the darkness thrilled with its breath
Still ruled in the viewless night,
As love might rule over death.

The time of lovers is brief;
From the fair first joy to the grief
That tells when love is grown old,
From the warm wild kiss to the cold,
From the red to the white-rose leaf,
They have but a season to seem
As roseleaves lost on a stream
That part not and pass not apart
As a spirit from dream to dream,
As a sorrow from heart to heart.

From the bloom and the gloom that encloses
The death-bed of Love where he dozes

Till a relic be left not of sand
To the hour-glass that breaks in his hand ;
From the change in the gray garden-closes
To the last stray grass of the strand,
A rain and ruin of roses
Over the red rose-land.

A WASTED VIGIL.

I.

COULDST thou not watch with me one hour ?
Behold,
Dawn skims the sea with flying feet of gold,
With sudden feet that graze the gradual sea ;
Couldst thou not watch with me ?

II.

What, not one hour ? for star by star the night
Falls, and her thousands world by world take flight;
They die, and day survives, and what of thee ?
Couldst thou not watch with me ?

III.

Lo, far in heaven the web of night undone,
And on the sudden sea the gradual sun;
Wave to wave answers, tree responds to tree ;
Couldst thou not watch with me ?

IV.

Sunbeam by sunbeam creeps from line to line,
Foam by foam quickens on the brightening brine ;
Sail by sail passes, flower by flower gets free ;
Couldst thou not watch with me ?

V.

Last year, a brief while since, an age ago,
A whole year past, with bud and bloom and snow,
O moon that wast in heaven, what friends were we!
Couldst thou not watch with me ?

VI.

Old moons, and last year's flowers, and last year's snows
Who now saith to thee, moon ? or who saith, rose ?
O dust and ashes, once found fair to see !
Couldst thou not watch with me ?

VII.

O dust and ashes, once thought sweet to smell !
With me it is not, is it with thee well ?
O sea-drift blown from windward back to lee!
Couldst thou not watch with me ?

VIII.

The old year's dead hands are full of their dead flowers,
The old days are full of dead old loves of ours
Born as a rose, and briefer born than she;
Couldst thou not watch with me ?

IX.

Could two days live again of that dead year,
One would say, seeking us and passing here,
Where is she? and one answering, *Where is he?*
Couldst thou not watch with me ?

X.

Nay, those two lovers are not anywhere;
If we were they, none knows us what we were,
Nor aught of all their barren grief and glee.
Couldst thou not watch with me ?

XI.

Half false, half fair, all feeble, be my verse
Upon thee not for blessing nor for curse
For some must stand, and some must fall or flee;
Couldst thou not watch with me ?

XII.

As a new moon above spent stars thou wast;
But stars endure after the moon is past.
Couldst thou not watch one hour, though I watch three ?
Couldst thou not watch with me ?

XIII.

What of the night ? The night is full, the tide
Storms inland, the most ancient rocks divide;
Yet some endure, and bow nor head nor knee;
Couldst thou not watch with me ?

XIV.

Since thou art not as these are, go thy ways.
Thou hast no part in all my nights and days.
Lie still, sleep on, be glad—as such things be;
Thou couldst not watch with me.

THE COMPLAINT OF LISA.

(*Double Sestina.*)

DECAMERON, X. 7.

THERE is no woman living that draws breath
So sad as I, though all things sadden her.
There is not one upon life's weariest way
Who is weary as I am weary of all but death.
Toward whom I look as looks the sunflower
All day with all his whole soul toward the sun;
While in the sun's sight I make moan all day,
And all night on my sleepless maiden bed
Weep and call out on death, O Love, and thee,
That thou or he would take me to the dead,
And know not what thing evil I have done
That life should lay such heavy hand on me.

Alas, Love, what is this thou wouldst with me?
What honor shalt thou have to quench my breath,
Or what shall my heart broken profit thee?
O Love, O great god Love, what have I done,
That thou shouldst hunger so after my death?
My heart is harmless as my life's first day:
Seek out some false fair woman, and plague her
Till her tears even as my tears fill her bed:
I am the least flower in thy flowery way,
But till my time be come that I be dead
Let me live out my flower-time in the sun
Though my leaves shut before the sunflower.

O Love, Love, Love, the kingly sunflower!
Shall he the sun hath looked on look on me,
That live down here in shade, out of the sun,
Here living in the sorrow and shadow of death?
Shall he that feeds his heart full of the day
Care to give mine eyes light, or my lips breath?
Because she loves him shall my lord love her
Who is as a worm in my lord's kingly way?
I shall not see him or know him alive or dead;
But thou, I know thee, O Love, and pray to thee
That in brief while my brief life-days be done,
And the worm quickly make my marriage-bed.

For underground there is no sleepless bed:
But here since I beheld my sunflower
These eyes have slept not, seeing all night and day
His sunlike eyes, and face fronting the sun.
Wherefore if anywhere be any death,
I would fain find and fold him fast to me,
That I may sleep with the world's eldest dead,
With her that died seven centuries since, and her
That went last night down the night-wandering way.
For this is sleep indeed, when labor is done,
Without love, without dreams, and without breath,
And without thought, O name unnamed! of thee.

Ah, but, forgetting all things, shall I thee?
Wilt thou not be as now about my bed.
There underground as here before the sun?
Shall not thy vision vex me alive and dead,
Thy moving vision without form or breath?
I read long since the bitter tale of her
Who read the tale of Launcelot on a day,
And died, and had no quiet after death,
But was moved ever along a weary way,
Lost with her love in the underworld; ah me,
O my king, O my lordly sunflower,
Would God to me too such a thing were done!

But if such sweet and bitter things be done,
Then, flying from life, I shall not fly from thee
For in that living world without a sun
Thy vision will lay hold upon me dead,
And meet and mock me, and mar my peace in death.
Yet if being wroth God had such pity on her,
Who was a sinner and foolish in her day,
That even in hell they twain should breathe one breath,
Why should he not in some wise pity me?
So if I sleep not in my soft strait bed
I may look up and see my sunflower
As he the sun, in some divine strange way.

O poor my heart, well knowest thou in what way
This sore sweet evil unto us was done.
For on a holy and a heavy day
I was arisen out of my still small bed
To see the knights tilt, and one said to me
'The king,' and seeing him, somewhat stopped my breath,
And if the girl spake more, I heard not her.

For only I saw what I shall see when dead,
A kingly flower of knights, a sunflower.
That shown against the sunlight like the sun,
And like a fire, O heart, consuming thee,
The fire of love that lights the pyre of death.

Howbeit I shall not die an evil death
Who have loved in such a sad and sinless way,
That this my love, lord, was no shame to thee.
So when mine eyes are shut against the sun,
O my soul's sun, O the world's sunflower,
Thou nor no man will quite despise me dead.
And dying I pray with all my low last breath
That thy whole life may be as was that day,
That feast-day that made troth-plight death and me,
Giving the world light of thy great deeds done;
And that fair face brightening thy bridal bed,
That God be good as God hath been to her.

That all things goodly and glad remain with her,
All things that make glad life and goodly death;
That as a bee sucks from a sunflower
Honey, when summer draws delighted breath,
Her soul may drink of thy soul in like way,
And love make life a fruitful marriage-bed
Where day may bring forth fruits of joy to day
And night to night till days and nights be dead.
And as she gives light of her love to thee,
Give thou to her the old glory of days long done;
And either give some heat of light to me,
To warm me where I sleep without the sun.

O sunflower made drunken with the sun,
O knight whose lady's heart draws thine to her,
Great king, glad lover, I have a word to thee.
There is a weed lives out of the sun's way,
Hid from the heat deep in the meadow's bed,
That swoons and whitens at the wind's least breath,
A flower star-shaped, that all a summer day
Will gaze her soul out on the sunflower
For very love till twilight finds her dead.
But the great sunflower heeds not her poor death,
Knows not when all her loving life is done;
And so much knows my lord the king of me.

Aye, all day long he has no eye for me;
With golden eye following the golden sun
From rose-colored to purple-pillowed bed,
From birthplace to the flame-lit place of death,
From eastern end to western of his way.
So mine eye follows thee, my sunflower,
So the white star-flower turns and yearns to thee,
The sick weak weed, not well alive or dead.
Trod underfoot if any pass by her,
Pale, without color of summer or summer breath
In the shrunk shuddering petals, that have done
No work but love, and die before the day.

But thou, to-day, to-morrow, and every day,
Be glad and great, O love whose love slays me.
Thy fervent flower made fruitful from the sun
Shall drop its golden seed in the world's way,
That all men thereof nourished shall praise thee
For grain and flower and fruit of works well done;
Till thy shed seed, O shining sunflower,
Bring forth such growth of the world's garden-bed
As like the sun shall outlive age and death.
And yet I would thine heart had heed of her
Who loves thee alive; but not till she be dead.
Come, Love, then, quickly, and take her utmost breath.

Song, speak for me who am dumb as are the dead;
From my sad bed of tears I send forth thee,
To fly all day from sun's birth to sun's death
Down the sun's way after the flying sun,
For love of her that gave thee wings and breath
Ere day be done, to seek the sunflower.

FOR THE FEAST OF GIORDANO BRUNO,

PHILOSOPHER AND MARTYR.

I.

SON of the lightning and the light that glows
Beyond the lightning's or the morning's light,
Soul splendid with all-righteous love of right,
In whose keen fire all hopes and fears and woes

Were clean consumed, and from their ashes rose
Transfigured, and intolerable to sight
Save of purged eyes whose lids had cast off night,
In love's and wisdom's likeness when they close,
Embracing, and between them truth stands fast,
Embraced of either; thou whose feet were set
On English earth while this was England yet,
Our friend that art, our Sidney's friend that wast,
Heart hardier found and higher than all men's past,
Shall we not praise thee though thine own forget?

II.

Lift up thy light on us and on thine own,
O soul whose spirit on earth was as a rod
To scourge off priests, a sword to pierce their God,
A staff for man's free thought to walk alone,
A lamp to lead him far from shrine and throne
On ways untrodden where his fathers trod
Ere earth's heart withered at a high priest's nod
And all men's mouths that made not prayer made moan.
From bonds and torments and the ravening flame
Surely thy spirit of sense rose up to greet
Lucretius, where such only spirits meet,
And walk with him apart till Shelley came
To make the heaven of heavens more heavenly sweet
And mix with yours a third incorporate name.

AVE ATQUE VALE.

IN MEMORY OF CHARLES BAUDELAIRE.

Nous devrions pourtant lui porter quelques fleurs;
Les morts, les pauvres morts, ont de grandes douleurs,
Et quand Octobre souffle, émondeur des vieux arbres,
Son vent mélancolique a l'entour de leurs marbres,
Certe, ils doivent trouver les vivants bien ingrats.
Les Fleurs du Mal.

I.

SHALL I strew on thee rose or rue or laurel,
Brother, on this that was the veil of thee?
Or quiet sea-flower moulded by the sea,
Or simplest growth of meadow-sweet or sorrel.
Such as the summer-sleepy Dryads weave,
Waked up by snow-soft sudden rains at eve?
Or wilt thou rather, as on earth before,
Half-faded fiery blossoms, pale with heat
And full of bitter summer, but more sweet
To thee than gleanings of a northern shore
Trod by no tropic feet?

II.

For always thee the fervid languid glories
Allured of heavier suns in mightier skies;
Thine ears knew all the wandering watery sighs
Where the sea sobs round Lesbian promontories,
The barren kiss of piteous wave to wave
That knows not where is that Leucadian grave
Which hides too deep the supreme head of song.
Ah, salt and sterile as her kisses were,
The wild sea winds her and the green gulfs bear
Hither and thither, and vex and work her wrong,
Blind gods that cannot spare.

III.

Thou sawest, in thine old singing season brother,
Secrets and sorrows unbeheld of us:
Fierce loves, and lovely leaf-bud poisonous,
Bare to thy subtler eye, but for none other
Blowing by night in some unbreathed-in clime;
The hidden harvest of luxurious time,
Sin without shape, and pleasure without speech;
And where strange dreams in a tumultuous sleep
Make the shut eyes of stricken spirits weep;
And with each face thou sawest the shadow on each,
Seeing as men sow men reap.

IV.

O sleepless heart and sombre soul unslaking,
That were athirst for sleep and no more life
And no more love, for peace and no more strife!
Now the dim gods of death have in their keeping

Spirit and body and all the springs of song,
Is it well now where love can do no wrong,
Where stingless pleasure has no foam or fang
Behind the unopening closure of her lips?
Is it not well where soul from body slips
And flesh from bone divides without a pang
As dew from flower-bell drips?

V.

It is enough; the end and the beginning
Are one thing to thee, who art past the end.
O hand unclasped of unbeholden friend,
For thee no fruits to pluck, no palms for winning,
No triumph and no labor and no lust,
Only dead yew-leaves and a little dust.
O quiet eyes wherein the light saith nought,
Whereto the day is dumb, nor any night
With obscure finger silences your sight,
Nor in your speech the sudden soul speaks thought,
Sleep, and have sleep for light.

VI.

Now all strange hours and all strange loves are over,
Dreams and desires and sombre songs and sweet,
Hast thou found place at the great knees and feet
Of some pale Titan-woman like a lover,
Such as thy vision here solicited,
Under the shadow of her fair vast head,
The deep division of prodigious breasts,
The solemn slope of mighty limbs asleep,
The weight of awful tresses that still keep
The savor and shade of old-world pine-forests
Where the wet hill-winds weep?

VII.

Hast thou found any likeness for thy vision?
O gardener of strange flowers, what bud, what bloom,
Hast thou found sown, what gathered in the gloom?
What of despair, of rapture, of derision,
What of life is there, what of ill or good?
Are the fruits gray like dust or bright like blood?
Does the dim ground grow any seed of ours,
The faint fields quicken any terrene root,
In low lands where the sun and moon are mute
And all the stars keep silence? Are there flowers
At all, or any fruit?

VIII.

Alas, but though my flying song flies after,
O sweet strange elder singer, thy more fleet
Singing, and footprints of thy fleeter feet,
Some dim derision of mysterious laughter
From the blind tongueless warders of the dead,
Some gainless glimpse of Proserpine's veiled head,
Some little sound of unregarded tears
Wept by effaced unprofitable eyes,
And from pale mouths some cadence of dead sighs—
These only, these the hearkening spirit hears,
Sees only such things rise.

IX.

Thou art far too far for wings of words to follow,
Far too far off for thought or any prayer.
What ails us with thee, who art wind and air?
What ails us gazing where all seen is hollow?
Yet with some fancy, yet with some desire,
Dreams pursue death as winds a flying fire,
Our dreams pursue our dead and do not find.
Still, and more swift than they, the thin flames flies,
The low light fails us in elusive skies,
Still the foiled earnest ear is deaf, and blind
Are still the eluded eyes.

X.

Not thee, O never thee, in all time's changes,
Not thee, but this the sound of thy sad soul,
The shadow of thy swift spirit, this shut scroll
I lay my hand on, and not death estranges
My spirit from communion of thy song—
These memories and these melodies that throng
Veiled porches of a Muse funereal—
These I salute, these touch, these clasp and fold
As though a hand were in my hand to hold,
Or through mine ears a mourning musical
Of many mourners rolled.

XI.

I among these, I also, in such station
As when the pyre was charred, and piled the sods,

And offering to the dead made, and their gods,
The old mourners had, standing to make libation,
I stand, and to the gods and to the dead
Do reverence without prayer or praise, and shed
Offering to these unknown, the gods of gloom,
And what of honey and spice my seed-lands bear,
And what I may of fruits in this chilled air,
And lay, Orestes-like, across the tomb
A curl of severed hair.

XII.

But by no hand nor any treason stricken,
Not like the low-lying head of Him, the King,
The flame that made of Troy a ruinous thing,
Thou liest and on this dust no tears could quicken
There fall no tears like theirs that all men hear
Fall tear by sweet imperishable tear
Down the opening leaves of holy poet's pages.
Thee not Orestes, not Electra mourns;
But bending us-ward with memorial urns
The most high Muses that fulfil all ages
Weep, and our God's heart yearns.

XIII.

For, sparing of his sacred strength, not often
Among us darkling here the lord of light
Makes manifest his music and his might
In hearts that open and in lips that soften
With the soft flame and heat of songs that shine.
Thy lips indeed he touched with bitter wine,
And nourished them indeed with bitter bread;
Yet surely from his hand thy soul's food came,
The fire that scarred thy spirit at his flame
Was lighted, and thine hungering heart he fed
Who feeds our hearts with fame.

XIV.

Therefore he too now at thy soul's sunsetting,
God of all suns and songs, he too bends down
To mix his laurel with thy cypress crown
And save thy dust from blame and from forgetting.
Therefore he too, seeing all thou wert and art,
Compassionate, with sad and sacred heart,
Mourns thee of many his children the last dead,
And hallows with strange tears and alien sighs
Thine unmelodious mouth and sunless eyes,
And over thine irrevocable head
Sheds light from the under skies.

XV.

And one weeps with him in the ways Lethean,
And stains with tears her changing bosom chill;
That obscure Venus of the hollow hill,
That thing transformed which was the Cytherean,
With lips that lost their Grecian laugh divine
Long since, and face no more called Erycine
A ghost, a bitter and luxurious god.
Thee also with fair flesh and singing spell
Did she, a sad and second prey, compel
Into the footless places once more trod,
And shadows hot from hell.

XVI.

And now no sacred staff shall break in blossom,
No choral salutation lure to light
A spirit with perfume and sweet night
And love's tired eyes and hands and barren bosom.
There is no help for these things; none to mend,
And none to mar; not all our songs, O friend,
Will make death clear or make life durable.
Howbeit with rose and ivy and wild vine
And with wild notes about this dust of thine
At least I fill the place where white dreams dwell
And wreathe an unseen shrine.

XVII.

Sleep; and if life was bitter to thee, pardon,
If sweet, give thanks; thou hast no more to live
And to give thanks is good, and to forgive.
Out of the mystic and the mournful garden
Where all day through thine hands in barren braid
Wove the sick flowers of secrecy and shade,
Green buds of sorrow and sin, and remnants gray,
Sweet-smelling, pale with poison, sanguine-hearted,
Passions that sprang from sleep and thoughts that started,
Shall death not bring us all as thee one day
Among the days departed?

XVIII.

For thee, O now a silent soul, my brother,
Take at my hands this garland, and farewell.
Thin is the leaf, and chill the wintry smell,
And chill the solemn earth, a fatal mother,
With sadder than the Niobean womb,
And in the hollow of her breasts a tomb.
Content thee, howsoe'er, whose days are done:
There lies not any troublous thing before,
Nor sight nor sound to war against thee more,
For whom all winds are quiet as the sun,
All waters as the shore.

MEMORIAL VERSES.

ON THE DEATH OF THEOPHILE GAUTIER.

Death, what hast thou to do with me? So saith
Love, with eyes set against the face of Death;
What have I done, O thou strong Death, to thee,
That mine own lips should wither from thy breath?

Though thou be blind as fire or as the sea,
Why should thy waves and storms make war on me?
Is it for hate thou hast to find me fair,
Or for desire to kiss, if it might be,
My very mouth of song, and kill me there?
So with keen rains vexing his crownless hair,
With bright feet bruised from no delightful way,
Through darkness and the disenchanted air,

Lost Love went weeping half a winter's day.
And the armed wind that smote him seemed to say,
How shall the dew live when the dawn is fled,
Or wherefore should the Mayflower outlast May?

Then Death took Love by the right hand and said,
Smiling: Come now and look upon thy dead.
But Love cast down the glories of his eyes,
And bowed down like a flower his flowerless head.

And Death spake, saying: What ails thee in such wise,
Being God, to shut thy sight up from the skies?
If thou canst see not, hast thou ears to hear?
Or is thy soul too as a leaf that dies?

Even as he spake with fleshless lips of fear,
But soft as sleep sings in a tired man's ear,
Behold, the winter was not, and its might
Fell, and fruits broke forth of the barren year.

And upon earth was largess of great light,
And moving music winged for world-wide flight,
And shapes and sounds of gods beheld and heard
And day's foot set upon the neck of night.

And with such song the hollow ways were stirred
As of a god's heart hidden in a bird,
Or as the whole soul of the sun in spring
Should find full utterance in one flower-soft word,

And all the season should break forth and sing
From one flower's lips, in one rose triumphing;
Such breath and light of song as of a flame
Made ears and spirits of them that heard it ring.

And Love beholding knew not for the same
The shape that led him, nor in face nor name,
For he was bright and great of thews and fair,
And in Love's eyes he was not Death, but Fame.

Not that gray ghost whose life is empty and bare
And his limbs moulded out of mortal air,
A cloud of change that shifts into a shower
And dies and leaves no light for time to wear:

But a god clothed with his own joy and power,
A god re-risen out of his mortal hour
Immortal, king and lord of time and space,
With eyes that look on them as from a tower.

And where he stood the pale sepulchral place
Bloomed, as new life might in a bloodless face,
And where men sorrowing came to seek a tomb
With funeral flowers and tears for grief and grace,

They saw with light as of a world in bloom
The portal of the House of Fame illume
The ways of life wherein we toiling tread,
And watched the darkness as a brand consume.

And through the gates where rule the deathless dead
The sound of a new singer's soul was shed
That sang among his kinsfolk, and a beam
Shot from the star on a new ruler's head.

A new star lighting the Lethean stream,
A new song mixed into the song supreme
Made of all souls of singers and their might,
That makes of life and time and death a dream.

Thy star, thy song, O soul that in our sight
Wast as a sun that made for man's delight
Flowers and all fruits in season, being so near
The sun-god's face, our god that gives us light.

To him of all gods that we love or fear
Thou among all men by thy name wast dear,
Dear to the god that gives us spirit of song
To bind and burn all hearts of men that hear.

The god that makes men's words too swe and strong
For life or time or death to do them wrong,
Who sealed with his thy spirit for a sign
And filled it with his breath thy whole life long.

Who made thy moist lips fiery with new wine
Pressed from the grapes of song the sovereign vine,
And with all love of all things loveliest
Gave thy soul power to make them more divine.

That thou might'st breathe upon the breathless rest
Of marble, till the brows and lips and breast
Felt fall from off them as a cancelled curse
That speechless wherewith they lived opprest,

Who gave thee strength and heat of spirit to pierce
All clouds of form and color that disperse,
And leave the spirit of beauty to remould
In types of clean chryselephantine verse.

Who gave thee words more golden than fine gold
To carve in shapes more glorious than of old,
And build thy songs up in the sight of time
As statues set in godhead manifold:

In sight and scorn of temporal change and clime
That meet the sun re-risen with refluent rhyme
—As god to god might answer face to face—
From lips whereon the morning strikes sublime.

Dear to the god, our god who gave thee place
Among the chosen of days, the royal race,
The lords of light, whose eyes of old and ears
Saw even on earth and heard him for a space.

There are the souls of those once mortal years
That wrought with fire of joy and light of tears
In words divine as deeds that grew thereof
Such music as he swoons with love who hears.

There are the lives that lighten from above
Our under lives, the spheral souls that move
Through the ancient heaven of song-illumined air
Whence we that hear them singing die with love.

There all the crowned Hellenic heads, and there
The old gods who made men godlike as they were,
The lyric lips wherefrom all songs take fire,
Live eyes, and light of Apollonian hair.

There, round the sovereign passion of that lyre
Which the stars hear and tremble with desire,
The ninefold light Pierian is made one
That here we see divided, and aspire,

Seeing, after this or that crown to be won;
But where they hear the singing of the sun,
All form, all sound, all color, and all thought
Are as one body and soul in unison.

There the song sung shines as a picture wrought
The painted mouths sing that on earth say nought,
The carven limbs have sense of blood and growth
And large-eyed life that seeks nor lacks not aught.

There all the music of thy living mouth
Lives, and all lovers wrought of thine hand in youth
And bound about the breasts and brows with gold
And colored pale or dusk from north to south.

Fair living things made to thy will of old,
Born of thy lips, no births of mortal mould,
That in the world of song about thee wait
Where thought and truth are one and manifold.

Within the graven lintels of the gate
That here divides our vision and our fate,
The dreams we walk in and the truths of sleep,
All sense and spirit have life inseparate.

There what one thinks, in his to grasp and keep;
There are no dreams, but very joys to reap,
No foiled desires that die before delight,
No fears to see across our joys and weep.

There hast thou all thy will of thought and sight,
All hope for harvest, and all heaven for flight;
The sunrise of whose golden-mouthed glad head
To paler songless ghosts was heat and light.

Here where the sunset of our year is red
Men think of thee as of the summer dead,
Gone forth before the snows, before thy day,
With unshod feet, with brows unchapleted.

Couldst thou not wait till age had wound, they say,
Round those wreathed brows his soft white blossoms? Nay
Why shouldst thou vex thy soul with this harsh air,
Thy bright-winged soul, once free to take its way?

Nor for men's reverence hadst thou need to wear
The holy flower of gray time-hallowed hair;
Nor were it fit that aught of thee grew old,
Fair lover all thy days of all things fair.

And hear we not thy words of molten gold
Singing? or is their light and heat acold
Whereat men warmed their spirits? Nay, for all
These yet are with us, ours to hear and hold.

The lovely laughter, the clear tears, the call
Of love to love on ways where shadows fall,
Through doors of dim division and disguise,
And music made of doubts unmusical;

The love that caught strange light from death's own eyes,*
And filled death's lips with fiery words and sighs,
And half asleep let feed from veins of his
Her close red warm snake's mouth, Egyptian-wise:

And that great night of love more strange than this,†
When she that made the whole world's bale and bliss
Made king of the whole world's desire a slave,
And killed him in mid kingdom with a kiss;

Veiled loves that shifted shapes and shafts, and gave,‡
Laughing, strange gifts to hands that durst not crave,
Flowers double-blossomed, fruits of scent and hue
Sweet as the bride-bed, stranger than the grave;

*La Morte Amoureuse.
†Une Nuit de Cléopâtre. ‡Mademoiselle de Maupin

All joys and wonders of old lives and new
That ever in love's shine or shadow grew,
And all the grief whereof he dreams and grieves,
And all sweet roots fed on his light and dew;

All these through thee our spirit of sense perceives,
As threads in the unseen woof thy music weaves,
Birds caught and snared that fill our ears with thee,
Bay-blossoms in thy wreath of brow-bound leaves.

Mixed with the masque of death's old comedy
Though thou too pass, have here our flowers, that we
For all the flowers thou gav'st upon thee shed,
And pass not crownless to Persephone.

Blue lotus-blooms and white and rosy-red
We wind with poppies for thy silent head,
And on this margin of the sundering sea
Leave thy sweet light to rise upon the dead.

SONNET.

(WITH A COPY OF "MADEMOISELLE DE MAUPIN.")

THIS is the golden book of spirit and sense,
The holy writ of beauty; he that wrought
Made it with dreams and faultless words and thought
That seeks and finds and loses in the dense
Dim air of life that beauty's excellence
Wherewith love makes one hour of life distraught
And all hours after follow and find not aught.
Here is that height of all love's eminence
Where man may breathe but for a breathing-space
And feel his soul burn as an altar-fire
To the unknown God of unachieved desire,
And from the middle mystery of the place
Watch lights that break, hear sounds as of a quire,
But see not twice unveiled the veiled God's face.

AGE AND SONG.

(TO BARRY CORNWALL.)

I.

IN vain men tell us time can alter
Old loves or make old memories falter,
That with the old year the old year's life closes.
The old dew still falls on the old sweet flowers,
The old sun revives the new-fledged hours,
The old summer rears the new-born roses.

II.

Much more a Muse that bears upon her
Raiment and wreath and flower of honor,
Gathered long since and long since woven,
Fades not or falls as fall the vernal
Blossoms that bear no fruit eternal,
By summer or winter charred or cloven.

III.

No time casts down, no time upraises,
Such loves, such memories, and such praises,
As need no grace of sun or shower,
No saving screen from frost or thunder,
To tend and house around and under
The imperishable and fearless flower.

IV.

Old thanks, old thoughts, old aspirations,
Outlive men's lives and lives of nations,
Dead, but for one thing which survives—
The inalienable and unpriced treasure,
The old joy of power, the old pride of pleasure,
That lives in light above men's lives.

IN MEMORY OF BARRY CORNWALL.

(OCTOBER 4, 1874.)

I.

IN the garden of death, where the singers whose names are deathless
One with another make music unheard of men,
Where the dead sweet roses fade not of lips long breathless,
And the fair eyes shine that shall weep not or change again,
Who comes now crowned with the blossom of snow-white years?

What music is this that the world of the dead men hears?

II.

Beloved of men, whose words on our lips were honey,
Whose name in our ears and our fathers' ears was sweet,
Like summer gone forth of the land his songs made sunny,
To the beautiful veiled bright world where the glad ghosts meet,
Child, father, bridegroom and bride, and anguish and rest,
No soul shall pass of a singer than this more blest.

III.

Blest for the years' sweet sake that were filled and brightened,
As a forest with birds, with the fruit and the flower of his song;
For the souls' sake blest that heard, and their cares were lightened,
For the hearts' sake blest that have fostered his name so long;
By the living and dead lips blest that have loved his name,
And clothed with their praise and crowned with their love for fame.

IV.

Ah, fair and fragrant his fame as flowers that close not,
That shrink not by day for heat or for cold by night,
As a thought in the heart shall increase when the heart's self knows not,
Shall endure in our ears as a sound, in our eyes as a light;
Shall wax with the years that wane and the seasons' chime,
As a white rose thornless that grows in the garden of time.

V.

The same year calls, and one goes hence with another,
And men sit sad that were glad for their sweet songs' sake;
The same year beckons, and elder with younger brother
Takes mutely the cup from his hand that we all shall take.*
They pass ere the leaves be past or the snows be come;
And the birds are loud, but the lips that outsang them dumb.

VI.

Time takes them home that we loved, fair names and famous,
To the soft long sleep, to the broad sweet bosom of death;
But the flower of their souls he shall take not away to shame us,
Nor the lips lack song for ever that now lack breath.
For with us shall the music and perfume that die not dwell,
Though the dead to our dead bid welcome, and we farewell.

* Sydney Dobell died August 22, 187-

EPICEDE.

(James Lorimer Graham died at Florence. April 30 1876.)

LIFE may give for love to death
Little; what are life's gifts worth
To the dead wrapt round with earth?
Yet from lips of living breath
Sighs or words we are fain to give,
All that yet, while yet we live,
Life may give for love to death.

Dead so long before his day,
Passed out of the Italian sun
To the dark where all is done
Fallen upon the verge of May;
Here at life's and April's end
How should song salute my friend
Dead so long before his day?

Not a kindlier life or sweeter
Time, that lights and quenches men,
Now may quench or light again,
Mingling with the mystic metre
Woven of all men's lives with his
Not a clearer note than this,
Not a kindlier life or sweeter.

In this heavenliest part of earth
He that living loved the light,
Light and song, may rest aright,
One in death, if strange in birth,

With the deathless dead that make
Life the lovelier for their sake
In this heavenliest part of earth.

Light, and song, and sleep at last—
Struggling hands and suppliant knees
Get no goodlier gift than these.
Song that holds remembrance fast
Light that lightens death, attend
Round their graves who have to friend
Light, and song, and sleep at last.

TO VICTOR HUGO.

He had no children, who for love of men,
Being God, endured of Gods such things as thou,
Father; nor on his thunder-beaten brow
Fell such a woe as bows thine head again,
Twice bowed before, though godlike, in man's ken,
And seen too high for any stroke to bow
Save this of some strange God's that bends it now
The third time with such weight as bruised it then.
Fain would grief speak, fain utter for love's sake
Some word; but comfort who might bid thee take?
What God in your own tongue shall talk with thee,
Showing how all souls that look upon the sun
Shall be for thee one spirit and thy son,
And thy soul's child the soul of man to be?

January 3, 1876.

INFERIAE.

Spring, and the light and sound of things on earth
Requickening, all within our green sea's girth;
A time of passage or a time of birth
Fourscore years since as this year, first and last.

The sun is all about the world we see,
The breath and strength of very spring; and we
Live, love, and feed on our own hearts; but he
Whose heart fed mine has passed into the past.

Past, all things born with sense and blood and breath;
The flesh hears nought that now the spirit saith.
If death be like as birth and birth as death,
The first was fair—more fair should be the last.
Fourscore years since, and come but one month more
The count were perfect of his moral score
Whose sail went seaward yesterday from shore
To cross the last of many an unsailed sea.

Light, love and labor up to life's last height,
These three were stars unsetting in his sight
Even as the sun is life and heat and light
And sets not nor is dark when dark are we.

The life, the spirit, and the work were one
That here—ah, who shall say, that here are done
Nor I, that know not; father, not thy son,
For all the darkness of the night and sea.

A BIRTH-SONG.

For Olivia Frances Madox Rossetti, born September 20, 1875.)

Out of the dark sweet sleep
Where no dreams laugh or weep
Borne through bright gates of birth
Into the dim sweet light
Where day still dreams of night
While heaven takes form on earth,
White rose of spirit and flesh, and lily of love,
What note of song have we
Fit for the birds and thee,
Fair nestling couched beneath the mother-dove?

Nay, in some more divine
Small speechless song of thine
Some news too good for words
Heart-hushed and smiling, we
Might hope to have of thee,
The youngest of God's birds,
If thy sweet sense might mix itself with ours,
If ours might understand
The language of thy land,

Ere thine become the tongue of mortal hours:
Ere thy lips learn too soon
Their soft first human tune,
Sweet, but less sweet than now,
And thy raised eyes to read
Glad and good things indeed,
But none so sweet as thou:
Ere thought lift up their flower-soft lids to see
What life and love on earth
Bring thee for gifts at birth,
But none so good as thine who hast given us thee:

Now, ere thy sense forget
The heaven that fills it yet,
Now, sleeping or awake,
If thou couldst tell, or we
Ask and be heard of thee,
For love's undying sake,
From thy dumb lips divine and bright mute speech
Such news might touch our ear
That then would burn to hear
Too high a message now for man's to reach.

Ere the gold hair of corn
Had withered wast thou born,
To make the good time glad;
The time that but last year
Fell colder than a tear
On hearts and hopes turned sad.
High hopes and hearts requickening in thy dawn,
Even theirs whose life-springs, child,
Filled thine with life and smiled,
But then wept blood for half their own with drawn.*

If death and birth be one,
And set with rise of sun,
And truth with dreams divine,
Some word might come with thee
From over the still sea
Deep hid in shade or shine,
Crossed by the crossing sails of death and birth,
Word of some sweet new thing
Fit for such lips to bring,
Some word of love, some afterthought of earth.

If love be strong as death,
By what so natural breath
As thine could this be said?
By what so lovely way
Could love send word to say
He lives and is not dead?
Such word alone were fit for only thee,
If his and thine have met
Where spirits rise and set,
His whom we see not, thine whom scarce we see:

His there new-born, as thou
New-born among us now;
His, here so fruitful-souled,
Now veiled and silent here,
Now dumb as thou last year,
A ghost of one year old:
If lights that change their sphere in changing meet,
Some ray might his not give
To thine who wast to live,
And make thy present with his past life sweet?

Let dreams that laugh or weep,
All glad and sad dreams, sleep;
Truth more than dreams is dear.
Let thoughts that change and fly,
Sweet thoughts and swift, go by;
More than all thought is here.
More than all hope can forge or memory feign
The life that in our eyes,
Made out of love's life, lies,
And flower-like fed with love for sun and rain.

Twice royal in its root
The sweet small olive-shoot
Here set in sacred earth;
Twice dowered with glorious grace
From either heaven-born race
First blended in its birth;
Fair God or Genius of so fair an hour
For love of either name
Twice crowned, with love and fame,
Guard and be gracious to the fair-named flower.

* Oliver Madox Brown died November 5, 1874, in his twentieth year.

EX-VOTO.

When their last hour shall rise
Pale on these mortal eyes,
Herself like one that dies,
And kiss me dying
The cold last kiss, and fold
Close round my limbs her cold
Soft shade as raiment rolled
And leave them lying.

If aught my soul would say
Might move to hear me pray
The birth-god of my day
That he might hearken,
This grace my heart should crave,
To find no landward grave
That worldly springs make brave,
World's winters darken,

Nor grow through gradual hours
The cold blind seed of flowers
Made by new beams and showers
From limbs that moulder,
Nor take my part with earth,
But find for death's new birth
A bed of larger girth,
More chaste and colder.

Not earth's for spring and fall,
Not earth's at heart, not all
Earth's making, though men call
Earth only mother,
Not hers at heart she bare
Me, but thy child, O fair
Sea, and thy brother's care,
The wind thy brother.
Yours was I born, and ye,
The sea-wind and the sea,
Made all my soul in me
A song forever,
A harp to string and smite
For love's sake of the bright
Wind and the sea's delight,
To fail them never:

Not while on this side death
I hear what either saith
And drink of either's breath
With heart's thanksgiving
That in my veins like wine
Some sharp salt blood of thine,
Some springtide pulse of brine
Yet leaps up living.

When thy salt lips wellnigh
Sucked in my mouth's last sigh,
Grudged I so much to die
This death as others?
Was it no ease to think
The chalice from whose brink
Fate gave me death to drink
Was thine,—my mother's?

Thee too, the all-fostering earth,
Fair as thy fairest birth,
More than thy worthiest worth,
We call, we know thee,
More sweet and just and dread
Than live men highest of head
Or even thy holiest dead
Laid low below thee.

The sunbeam on the sheaf,
The dewfall on the leaf,
All joy, all grace, all grief,
Are thine for giving;
Of thee our loves are born,
Our lives and loves, that mourn
And triumph; tares with corn,
Dead seed with living:

All good and ill things done
In eyeshot of the sun
t last in thee made one
Rest well contented;
All words of all man's breath
And works he doth or saith,
All wholly done to death,
None long lamented.

A slave to sons of thee,
Thou, seeming, yet art free;
But who shall make the sea
Serve even in seeming?
What plough shall bid it bear
Seed to the sun and the air,
Fruit for thy strong sons' fare,
Fresh wine's foam streaming?

What oldworld son of thine,
Made drunk with death as wine,
Hath drunk the bright sea's brine
With lips of laughter?
Thy blood they drink; but he
Who hath drunken of the sea
Once deeplier than of thee
Shall drink not after.

Of thee thy sons of men
Drink deep, and thirst again;
For wine in feasts, and then
In fields for slaughter;
But thirst shall touch not him
Who hath felt with sense grown dim
Rise, covering lip and limb,
The wan sea's water.

All fire of thirst that aches
The salt sea cools and slakes
More than all springs or lakes,
Freshets or shallows;
Wells where no beam can burn
Through frondage of the fern
That hides from hart and hern
The haunt it hallows.

Peace with all graves on earth
For death or sleep or birth
Be alway, one in worth
One with another;
But when my time shall be,
O mother, O my sea,
Alive or dead, take me,
Me too, my mother.

A BALLAD OF DREAMLAND.

I HID my heart in a nest of roses,
Out of the sun's way, hidden apart;
In a softer bed than the soft white snow's is,
Under the roses I hid my heart.
Why would it sleep not? why should it start,
When never a leaf of the rose-tree stirred?
What made sleep flutter his wings and part?
Only the song of a secret bird.

Lie still. I said, for the wind's wing closes,
And mild leaves muffle the keen sun's dart;
Lie still, for the wind on the warm sea dozes,
And the wind is unquieter yet than thou art.
Does a thought in thee still as a thorn's wound smart?
Does the fang still fret thee of hope deferred?
What bids the lids of thy sleep dispart?
Only the song of a secret bird.

The green land's name that a charm encloses,
It never was writ in the traveller's chart,
And sweet on its trees as the fruit that grows is,
It never was sold in the merchant's mart.
The swallows of dreams through its dim fields dart,
And sleep's are the tunes in its tree-tops heard;
No hound's note wakens the wildwood hart,
Only the song of a secret bird.

ENVOI.

In the world of dreams I have chosen my part.
To sleep for a season and hear no word
Of true love's truth or of light love's art,
Only the song of a secret bird.

CYRIL TOURNEUR.

A SEA that heaves with horror of the night,
As maddened by the moon that hangs aghast
With strain and torment of the ravening blast,
Haggard as hell, a bleak blind bloody light;
No shore but one red reef of rock in sight,
Whereon the waifs of many a wreck were cast
And shattered in the fierce nights overpast
Wherein more souls toward hell than heaven took flight;
And 'twixt the shark-toothed rocks and swallowing shoals
A cry as out of hell from all these souls
Sent through the sheer gorge of the slaughtering sea,
Whose thousand throats, full-fed with life by death,
Fill the black air with foam and furious breath;
And over all these one star—Chastity.

A BALLAD OF FRANCOIS VILLON,

PRINCE OF ALL BALLAD-MAKERS.

BIRD of the bitter bright gray golden morn
Scarce risen upon the dusk of dolorous years,
First of us all and sweetest singer born
Whose far shrill note the world of new men hears
Cleave the cold shuddering shade as twilight clears;
When song new-born put off the old world's attire
And felt its tune on her changed lips expire,
Writ foremost on the roll of them that came
Fresh girt for service of the latter lyre,
Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name!

Alas the joy, the sorrow and the scorn,
That clothed thy life with hopes and sins and fears,
And gave thee stones for bread and tares for corn
And plume-plucked jail-birds for thy starveling peers
Till death clipt close their flight with shameful shears;
Till shifts came short and loves were hard to hire,
When lilt of song nor twitch of twangling wire
Could buy thee bread or kisses; when light fame

Spurned like a ball and haled through brake and briar,
Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name!

Poor splendid wings so frayed and soiled and torn!
Poor kind wild eyes so dashed with light quick tears!
Poor perfect voice, most blithe when most forlorn,
That rings athwart the sea whence no man steers
Like joy-bells crossed with death-bells in our ears!
What far delight has cooled the fierce desire
That like some ravenous bird was strong to tire
On that frail flesh and soul consumed with flame,
But left more sweet than roses to respire,
Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name?

ENVOI.

Prince of sweet songs made out of tears and fire,
A harlot was thy nurse, a God thy sire;
Shame soiled thy song, and song assoiled thy shame.
But from thy feet now death has washed the mire,
Love reads our first at head of all our quire,
Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name.

PASTICHE.

Now the days are all gone over
Of our singing, love by lover.
Days of summer-colored seas
Blown adrift, through beam and breeze.

Now the nights are all past over
Of our dreaming, dreams that hover
In a mist of fair false things,
Nights afloat on wide wan wings.

Now the loves with faith for mother,
Now the fears which hope for brother,
Scarce are with us as strange words,
Notes from songs of last year's birds.

Now all good that comes or goes is
As the smell of last year's roses,
As the radiance in our eyes
Shot from summer's ere he dies.

Now the morning faintlier risen
Seems no God come forth of prison,
But a bird of plume-plucked wing,
Pale with thoughts of evening.

Now hath hope, outraced in running
Given the touch up of his cunning
And the palm he thought to wear
Even to his own strong child—despair.

BEFORE SUNSET.

In the lower lands of day
On the hither side of night,
There is nothing that will stay,
There are all things soft to sight;
Lighted shade and shadowy light
In the wayside and the way,
Hours the sun has spared to smite,
Flowers the rain has left to play.

Shall these hours run down and say
No good thing of thee and me?
Time that mad us and will slay
Laughs at love in me and thee;
But if here the flowers may see
One whole hour of amorous breath,
Time shall die, and love shall be
Lord as time was over death.

SONG.

Love laid his sleepless head
On a thorny rosy bed;
And his eyes with tears were red,
And pale his lips as the dead.

And fear and sorrow and scorn
Kept watch by his head forlorn.
Till the night was overworn
And the world was merry with morn.

And Joy came up with the day
And kissed Love's lips as he lay,
And the watchers ghostly and gray
Sped from his pillow away.

And his eyes as the dawn grew bright,
And his lips waxed ruddy as light:
Sorrow may reign for a night,
But day shall bring back delight.

A VISION OF SPRING IN WINTER.

I.

O TENDER time that love thinks long to see,
Sweet foot of spring that with her footfall sows
Late snowlike flowery leavings of the snows,
Be not too long irresolute to be;
O mother-month, where have they hidden thee?
Out of the pale time of the flowerless rose
I reach my heart out toward the springtime lands.
I stretch my spirit forth to the fair hours,
The purplest of the prime;
I lean my soul down over them, with hands
Made wide to take the ghostly growths of flowers;
I send my love back to the lovely time.

II.

Where has the greenwood hid thy gracious head?
Veiled with what visions while the gray world grieves,
Or muffled with what shadows of green leaves,
What warm intangible green shadows spread
To sweeten the sweet twilight for thy bed?
What sleep enchants thee? what delight deceives?
Where the deep dreamlike dew before the dawn
Feels not the fingers of the sunlight yet
Its silver web unweave,
Thy footless ghost on some unfooted lawn
Whose air the unrisen sunbeams fear to fret
Lives a ghost's life of daylong dawn and eve.

III.

Sunrise it sees not, neither set of star,
Large nightfall, nor imperial plenilune,
Nor strong sweet shape of the full-breasted noon;
But where the silver-sandalled shadows are,
Too soft for arrows of the sun to mar,
Moves with the mild gait of an ungrown moon:
Hard overhead the half-lit crescent swims,
The tender-colored night draws hardly breath.
The light is listening;
They watch the dawn of slender-shapen limbs,
Virginal, born again of doubtful death,
Chill foster-father of the weanling spring.

IV.

As sweet desire of day before the day,
As dreams of love before the true love born
From the outer edge of winter overworn
The ghost arisen of May before the May
Takes through dim air her unawakened way,
The gracious ghost of morning risen ere morn.
With little unblown breasts and child-eyed looks
Following, the very maid, the girl-child spring,
Lifts windward her bright brows,
Dips her light feet in warm and moving brooks,
And kindles with her own mouth's coloring
The fearful firstlings of the plumeless boughs.

V.

I seek thee sleeping, and awhile I see,
Fair face that art not, how thy maiden breath
Shall put at last the deadly days to death
And fill the fields and fire the woods with thee
And seaward hollows where my feet would be
When heaven shall hear the word that April saith
To change the cold heart of the weary time,
To stir and soften all the time to tears,
Tears joyfuller than mirth;
As even to May's clear height the young days climb
With feet not swifter than those fair first years
Whose flowers revive not with thy flowers on earth.

VI.

I would not bid thee, though I might, give back
One good thing youth has given and borne away;
I crave not any comfort of the day
That is not, nor on time's retrodden track
Would turn to meet the white-robed hours or black
That long since left me on their mortal way;
Nor light nor love that has been, nor the breath

That comes with the morning from the sun to be
And sets light hope on fire;
No fruit, no flower thought once too fair for death,
No flower nor hour once fallen from life's green tree,
No leaf once plucked or once fulfilled desire.

VII.

The morning song beneath the stars that fled
With twilight through the moonless mountain air,
While youth with burning lips and wreathless hair
Sang toward the sun that was to crown his head,
Rising; the hopes that triumphed and fell dead,
The sweet swift eyes and songs of hours that were;
These may'st thou not give back forever; these,
As at the sea's heart all her wrecks lie waste,
Lie deeper than the sea;
But flowers thou may'st, and winds, and hours of ease,
And all its April to the world thou may'st
Give back, and half my April back to me.

CHORIAMBICS.

Love, what ailed thee to leave life that was made lovely, we thought, with love?
What sweet visions of sleep lured thee away, down from the light above?

What strange faces of dreams, voices that called, hands that were raised to wave,
Lured or led thee, alas, out of the sun, down to the sunless grave?

Ah, thy luminous eyes! once was their light fed with the fire of day;
Now their shadowy lids cover them close, hush them and hide away.

Ah, thy snow-colored hands! once were they chains, mighty to bind me fast;
Now no blood in them burns, mindless of love, senseless of passion past.

Ah, thy beautiful hair! so was it once braided for me, for me;
Now for death is it crowned, only for death, lover and lord of thee.

Sweet, the kisses of death set on thy lips, colder are they than mine;
Colder surely than past kisses that love poured for thy lips as wine.

Lov'st thou death? is his face fairer than love's, brighter to look upon?
Seest thou light in his eyes, light by which love's pales and is overshone?

Lo, the roses of death, gray as the dust, chiller of leaf than snow!
Why let fall from thy hand love's that were thine, roses that loved thee so?

Large red lilies of love, sceptral and tall, lovely for eyes to see;
Thornless blossom of love, full of the sun, fruits that were reared for thee.

Now death's poppies alone circle thy hair, girdle thy breasts as white;
Bloodless blossoms of death, leaves that have sprung never against the light.

Nay then, sleep if thou wilt; love is content; what should he do to weep?
Sweet was love to thee once; now in thine eyes sweeter than love is sleep.

AT PARTING.

For a day and a night Love sang to us, played with us,
Folded us round from the dark and the light;
And our hearts were fulfilled of the music he made with us,
Made with our hearts and our lips while he stayed with us,
Stayed in mid passage his pinions from flight
For a day and a night

From his foes that kept watch with his wings had he hidden us,
Covered us close from the eyes that would smite,
From the feet that had tracked and the tongues that had chidden us

Sheltering in shade of the myrtles forbidden
us
Spirit and flesh growing one with delight
For a day and a night.

But his wings will not rest and his feet will
not stay for us:
Morning is here in the joy of its might;
With his breath has he sweetened a night
and a day for us;
Now let him pass, and the myrtles make way
for us;
Love can but last in us here at his height
For a day and a night.

A SONG IN SEASON.

I.

THOU whose beauty
Knows no duty
Due to love that moves thee never;
Thou whose mercies
Are men's curses,
And thy smile a scourge forever;

II.

Thou that givest
Death and livest
On the death of thy sweet giving;
Thou that sparest
Not nor carest
Though thy scorn leave no love living;

III.

Thou whose rootless
Flower is fruitless
As the pride its heart encloses,
But thine eyes are
As May skies are,
And thy words like spoken roses;

IV.

Thou whose grace is
In men's faces
Fierce and wayward as thy will is;
Thou whose peerless
Eyes are tearless,
And thy thoughts as cold sweet lilies;

V.

Thou that takest
Hearts and makest
Wrecks of loves to strew behind thee,
Whom the swallow
Sure should follow,
Finding summer where we find thee;

VI.

Thou that wakest
Hearts and breakest,
And thy broken hearts forgive thee,
That wilt make no
Pause and take no
Gift that love for love might give thee.

VII.

Thou that bindest
Eyes and blindest,
Serving worst who served thee longest;
Thou that speakest,
And the weakest
Heart is his that was the strongest;

VIII.

Take in season
Thought with reason;
Think what gifts are ours for giving;
Hear what beauty
Owes of duty
To the love that keeps it living.

IX.

Dust that covers
Long dead lovers
Song blows off with breath that brightens;
At its flashes
Their white ashes
Burst in bloom that lives and lightens.

X.

Had they bent not
Head or lent not
Ear to love and amorous duties,
Song had never
Saved forever,
Love, the least of all their beauties.

XI.

All the golden
Names of olden
Women yet by men's love cherished,
All our dearest
Thoughts hold nearest,
Had they loved not, all had perished

XII.

If no fruit is
Of thy beauties,
Tell me yet, since none may win them,
What and wherefore
Love should care for
Of all good things hidden in them?

XIII.

Pain for profit
Comes but of it,
If the lips that lure their lover's
Hold no treasure
Past the measure
Of the lightest hour that hovers.

XIV.

If they give not
Or forgive not
Gifts or thefts for grace or guerdon,
Love that misses
Fruit of kisses
Long will bear no thankless burden.

XV.

If they care not
Though love were not,
If no breath of his burn through them,
Joy must borrow
Song from sorrow,
Fear teach hope the way to woo them.

XVI.

Grief has measures
Soft as pleasure's,
Fear has moods that hope lies deep in,
Songs to sing him,
Dreams to bring him,
And a red-rose bed to sleep in.

XVII.

Hope with fearless
Looks and tearless
Lies and laughs too near the thunder;
Fear hath sweeter
Speech and meeter
For heart's love to hide him under.

XVIII.

Joy by daytime
Fills his playtime
Full of songs loud mirth takes pride in;
Night and morrow
Weave round sorrow
Thoughts as soft as sleep to hide

XIX.

Graceless faces,
Loveless graces,
Are but motes in light that quicken,
Sands that run down
Ere the sundown,
Rose-leaves dead ere autumn sicken.

XX.

Fair and fruitless
Charms are bootless
Spells to ward off age's peril;
Lips that give not
Love shall live not,
Eyes that meet not eyes are sterile.

XXI.

But the beauty
Bound in duty
Fast to love that falls off never
Love shall cherish
Lest it perish,
And its roots bears fruit forever.

TWO LEADERS.

βᾶτε δόμον, μεγάλοι φιλοτίμοι
Νυκτὸς παῖδες ἄπαιδες, ὑπ' εὐφρονι πομτᾷ.

I.

O GREAT and wise, clear-souled and high of heart,
One the last flower of Catholic love, that grows
Amid bare thorns their only thornless rose,
From the fierce juggling of the priests' loud mart
Yet alien, yet unspotted and apart
From the blind hard foul rout whose shameless shows
Mock the sweet heaven whose secret no man knows
With prayers and curses and the soothsayer's art;
One like a storm-god of the northern foam
Strong, wrought of rock that breasts and breaks the sea
And thunders back its thunder, rhyme for rhyme
Answering, as though to outroar the tides of time

And bid the world's wave back—what song should be
Theirs that with praise would bring and sing you home?

II.

With all our hearts we praise you whom ye hate,
High souls that hate us; for our hopes are higher,
And higher than yours the goal of our desire,
Though high your ends be as your hearts are great.
Your world of Gods and kings, of shrine and state,
Was of the night when hope and fear stood nigher,
Wherein men walked by light of stars and fire
Till man by day stood equal with his fate.
Honor not hate we give you, love not fear,
Last prophets of past kind, who fill the dome
Of great dead Gods with wrath and wail, nor hear
Time's word and man's: 'Go honored hence, go home,
Night's childless children; here your hour is done;
Pass with the stars, and leave us with the sun.'

VICTOR HUGO IN 1877.

'Dazzle mine eyes, or do I see three suns?'

ABOVE the spring-tide sundawn of the year,
A sunlike star, not born of day or night,
Filled the fair heaven of spring with heavenlier light,
Made of all ages orbed in one sole sphere
Whose light was as a Titan's smile or tear;
Then rose a ray more flowerlike, starry white,
Like a child's eye grown lovelier with delight,
Sweet as a child's heart-lightening laugh to hear;
And last a fire from heaven, a fiery rain
As of God's wrath on the unclean cities, fell
And lit the shuddering shades of half-seen hell
That shrank before it and were cloven in twain;
A beacon fired by lightning, whence all time
Sees red the bare black ruins of a crime.

CHILD'S SONG.

WHAT is gold worth, say,
Worth for work or play,
Worth to keep or pay,
Hide or throw away,
Hope about or fear?
What is love worth, pray?
Worth a tear?

Golden on the mould
Lie the dead leaves rolled
Of the wet woods old,
Yellow leaves and cold,
Woods without a dove;
Gold is worth but gold;
Love's worth love.

TRIADS.

I.

I.

THE word of the sun to the sky,
The word of the wind to the sea,
The word of the moon to the night,
What may it be?

II.

The sense to the flower of the fly,
The sense of the bird to the tree,
The sense to the cloud of the light,
Who can tell me?

III.

The song of the fields to the kye,
The song of the lime to the bee,
The song of the depth to the height,
Who knows all three?

II.

I.

The message of April to May
That May sends on into June
And June give out to July
For birthday boon;

II.

The delight of the dawn in the day,
The delight of the day in the noon,
The delight of a song in a sigh
That breaks the tune ;

III.

The secret of passing away,
The cost of the change of the moon,
None knows it with ear or with eye,
But all will soon.

III.

I.

The live wave's love for the shore,
The shore's for the wave as it dies,
The love of the thunder-fire
That sears the skies,

II.

We shall know not though life wax hoar,
Till all life, spent into sighs,
Burn out as consumed with desire
Of death's strange eyes.

III.

Till the secret be secret no more
In the light of one hour as it flies,
Be the hour as of suns that expire
Or suns that rise

FOUR SONGS OF FOUR SEASONS.

I. WINTER IN NORTHUMBERLAND.

I.

Outside the garden
The wet skies harden;
The gates are barred on
The summer side:
Shut out the flower-time,
'Sunbeam and shower-time;
Make way for our time,'
Wild winds have cried.
Green once and cheery,
The woods, worn weary,
Sigh as the dreary
Weak sun goes home:
A great wind grapples
The wave, and dapples
The dead green floor of the sea with foam.

II.

Through fell and moorland,
And salt-sea foreland,
Our noisy norland
Resounds and rings;
Waste waves thereunder
Are blown in sunder,
And winds make thunder
With cloudwide wings;
Sea-drift makes dimmer
The beacon's glimmer;
Nor sail nor swimmer
Can try the tides;
And snowdrifts thicken
Where, when leaves quicken,
Under the heather the sundew hides.

III.

Green land and red land,
Moorside and headland,
Are white as dead land,
Are all as one;
Nor honied heather
Nor bells to gather,
Fair with fair weather
And faithful sun:
Fierce frost has eaten
All flowers that sweeten
The fells rain-beaten;
And winds their foes
Have made the snow's bed
Down in the rose-bed;
Deep in the snow's bed bury the rose.

IV.

Bury her deeper
Than any sleeper;
Sweet dreams will keep her
All day, all night;
Though sleep benumb her
And time o'ercome her,
She dreams of summer,
And takes delight,
Dreaming and sleeping
In love's good keeping,
While rain is weeping
And no leaves cling;
Winds will come bringing her
Comfort, and singing her
Stories and songs and good news of the spring.

V.

Draw the white curtain
Close, and be certain
She takes no hurt in
Her soft low bed;
She feels no colder,
And grows not older,
Though snows enfold her
From foot to head;
She turns not chilly
Like weed and lily
In marsh or hilly
High watershed,

Or green soft island
In lakes of highland ;
She sleeps awhile, and she is not dead.

VI.

For all the hours,
Come sun, come showers,
Are friends of flowers,
And fairies all ;
When frost entrapped her,
They came and lapped her
In leaves, and wrapped her
With shroud and pall ;
In red leaves wound her,
With dead leaves bound her
Dead brows, and round her
A death-knell rang ;
Rang the death-bell for her,
Sang 'is it well for her,
Well, is it well with you, rose ?' they sang.

VII.

O what and where is
The rose now, fairies,
So shrill the air is,
So wild the sky ?
Poor last of roses,
Her worst of woes is
The noise she knows is
The winter's cry ;
His hunting hollo
Has scared the swallow ;
Fain would she follow
And fain would fly ;
But wind unsettles
Her poor last petals ;
Had she but wings, and she would not die.

VIII.

Come, as you love her,
Come close and cover
Her white face over,
And forth again
Ere sunset glances
On foam that dances,
Through lowering lances
Of bright white rain ;
And make your playtime
Of winter's daytime
As if the Maytime
Were here to sing ;
As if the snowballs
Were soft like blowballs,
Blown in a mist from the stalk in the spring.

IX.

Each reed that grows in
Our stream is frozen.
The fields it flows in
Are hard and black ;
The water-fairy
Waits wise and wary
Till time shall vary
And thaws come back.
'O sister, water,'
The wind besought her,
'O twin-born daughter
Of spring with me,
Stay with me, play with me,
Take the warm way with me.
Straight for the summer and oversea.'

X.

But winds will vary,
And wise and wary
The patient fairy
Of water waits ;
All shrunk and wizen,
In iron prison,
Till spring re-risen
Unbar the gates ;
Till, as with clamor
Of axe and hammer,
Chained streams that stammer
And struggle in straits
Burst bonds that shiver,
And thaws deliver
The roaring river in stormy spates.

XI.

In fierce March weather
White waves break tether,
And whirled together
At either hand,
Like weeds uplifted,
The tree-trunks rifted
In spars are drifted,
Like foam or sand,
Past swamp and sallow,
And reed-beds callow,
Through pool and shallow,
To wind and lee,
Till, no more tongue-tied,
Full flood and young tide
Roar down the rapids and storm the sea.

XII.

As men's cheeks faded
On shores invaded,
When shorewards waded
The lords of fight ;
When churl and craven
Saw hard on haven
The wide-winged raven
At mainmast height ;
When monks affrighted
To windward sighted
The birds full-flighted
Of swift sea-kings ;
So earth turns paler
When Storm the sailor
Steers in with a roar in the race of his wings.

XIII.

O strong sea-sailor,
Whose cheeks turn paler
For wind or hail or
For fear of thee ?
O far sea-farer,
O thunder-bearer,
Thy songs are rarer
Than soft songs be.
O fleet-foot stranger,
O north-sea ranger
Through days of danger
And ways of fear,
Blow thy horn here for us,
Blow the sky clear for us,
Send us the song of the sea to hear.

XIV.

Roll the strong stream of it
Up, till the scream of it
Wake from a dream of it
Children that sleep,
Seamen that fare for them
Forth, with a prayer for them ;
Shall not God care for them,
Angels not keep?
Spare not the surges
Thy stormy scourges ;
Spare us the dirges
Of wives that weep.
Turn back the waves for us :
Dig no fresh graves for us,
Wind, in the manifold gulfs of the deep.

XV.

O stout north-easter,
Sea-king, land-waster,
For all thine, haste, or
Thy stormy skill,
Yet hast thou never,
For all endeavor,
Strength to dissever
Or strength to spill,
Save of his giving
Who gave our living,
Whose hands are weaving
What ours fulfill ;
Whose feet tread under
The storms and thunder ;
Who made our wonder to work his will.

XVI.

His years and hours,
His world's blind powers,
His stars and flowers,
His nights and days,
Sea-tide and river,
And waves that shiver,
Praise God, the giver
Of tongues to praise.
Winds in their blowing,
And fruits in growing ;
Time in its going,
While time shall be ;
In death and living,
With one thanksgiving,
Praise him whose hand is the strength of the sea.

2. SPRING IN TUSCANY.

ROSE-RED lilies that bloom on the banner ;
Rose-cheeked gardens that revel in spring ;
Rose-mouthed acacias that laugh as they climb,
Like plumes for a queen's hand fashioned to fan her
With wind more soft than a wild dove's wing
What do they sing in the spring of their time?

If this be the rose that the world hears singing,
Soft in the soft night, loud in the day,
Songs for the fire-flies to dance as they hear;
If that be the song of the nightingale, springing
Forth in the form of a rose in May,
What do they say of the way of the year?

What of the way of the world gone Maying,
What of the work of the buds in the bowers,
What of the will of the wind on the wall,
Fluttering the wall-flowers, sighing and playing,
Shrinking again as a bird that cowers,
Thinking of hours when the flowers have to fall?

Out of the throats of the loud birds showering,
Out of the folds where the flag-lilies leap,
Out of the mouths of the roses stirred,
Out of the herbs on the walls reflowering,
Out of the heights where the sheer snows sleep,
Out of the deep and the steep, one word.

One from the lips of the lily-flames leaping,
The glad red lilies that burn in our sight,
The great live lilies for standard and crown;
One from the steeps where the pines stand sleeping,
One from the deep land, one from the height,
One from the light and the might of the town.

The lowlands laugh with delight of the highlands,
Whence May winds feed them with balm and breath
From hills that beheld in the years behind
A shape as of one from the blest souls' islands,
Made fair by a soul too fair for death,
With eyes on the light that should smite them blind.

Vallombrosa remotely remembers,
Perchance, what still to us seems so near,
That time not darkens it, change not mars,
The foot that she knew when her leaves were September's,
The face lift up to the star-blind seer,
That saw from his prison arisen his stars.

And Pisa broods on her dead, not mourning,
For love of her loveliness given them in fee;
And Prato gleams with the glad monk's gift
Whose hand was there as the hand of morning;
And Siena, set in the sand's red sea,
Lifts loftier her head than the red sand's drift.

And far to the fair south-westward lightens,
Girdled and sandalled and plumed with flowers,
At sunset over the love-lit lands,
The hill-side's crown where the wild hill brightens,
Saint Fina's town of the Beautiful Towers,
Hailing the sun with a hundred hands.

Land of us all that have loved thee dearliest,
Mother of men that were lords of man,
Whose name in the world's heart works as a spell,
My last song's light, and the star of mine earliest,
As we turn from thee, sweet, who wast ours for a span,
Fare well we may not who say farewell.

3. SUMMER IN AUVERGNE.

THE sundawn fills the land
Full as a feaster's hand
Fills full with bloom of bland
Bright wine his cup;
Flows full to flood that fills
From the arch of air it thrills
Those rust-red iron hills
With morning up;

Dawn, as a panther's springs,
With fierce and fire-fledged wings
Leaps on the land that rings
From her bright feet
Thro' all its lava-black
Cones that cast answer back
And cliffs of footless track
Where thunders meet.

The light speaks wide and loud
From deeps blown clean of cloud
As tho' days' heart were proud
And heaven's were glad;
The towers brown-striped and grey
Take fire from heaven of day
As tho' the prayers they pray
Their answers had.

Higher in these high first hours
Wax all the keen church towers,
And higher all hearts of ours
Than the old hills' crown,
Higher than the pillared height
Of that strange cliff-side bright
With basalt towers whose might
Strong time bows down.

'Shut out the flower time
Half sun's half shower time,
Make way for our time,'
Wild winds have cried.
What is love worth? nay,
Tell me, dear.

And the old fierce ruin there
Of the old wild princes' lair
Whose blood in mine hath share
Gapes gaunt and great
Toward heaven that long ago
Watched all the wan land's woe
Whereon the wind would blow
Of their bleak hate.

Dead are those deeds; but yet
Their memory seems to fret
Lands that might else forget
That old world's brand;
Dead all their sins and days;
Yet in this red climes rays
Some fiery memory stays
That scars their land.

4. AUTUMN IN CORNWALL.

THE year lies fallen and faded
On cliffs by clouds invaded,
With tongues of storms upbraided,
With wrath of waves bedinned;
And inland, wild with warning,
As in deaf ears or scorning,
The clarion even and morning
Rings of the south-west wind.

The wild bents wane and wither
In blasts whose breath bows hither
Their grey-grown heads and thither,
Unbles' of rain or sun;
The pale fierce heavens are crowded
Wite shapes like dreams beclouded,
As though the old year enshrouded
Lay, long ere life were done.

Full-charged with old-world wonders,
From dusk Tintagel thunders
A note that smites and sunders
The hard froze-fields of air;
A trumpet stormier-sounded
Than once from lists rebounded
When strong men sense-confounded
Fell thick in tourney there.

From scarce a duskier dwelling
Such notes of wail rose welling
Thro' the outer darkness, telling
In the awful singer's ears
What souls the darkness covers,
What love-lost souls of lovers,
Whose cry still hangs and hovers
In each man's born that hears.

For there by Hector's brother
And yet some thousand other
He that had grief to mother
Passed pale from Dante's sight;
With one fast linked as fearless,
Perchance, there only tearless;
Iseult, and Tristram, peerless
And perfect queen and knight.

A shrill-winged sound comes flying
North, as of wild souls crying
The cry of things undying,
That know what life must be:
Or as the old year's heart, stricken
Too sore for hope to quicken
By thoughts like thorns that thicken,
Broke, breaking with the sea.

THE WHITE CZAR.

[In an English magazine of 1877 there appeared a version of some insolent lines addressed by "A Russian Poet to the Empress of India." To these the first of the two following sonnets was designed to serve by way of counterblast. The writer will scarcely be suspected of royalism or imperialism; but it seemed to him that an insult levelled by Muscovite lips at the ruler of England might perhaps be less unfitly than unofficially resented by an Englishman who was also a republican.]

I.

GEHAZI by the hue that chills thy cheek
And Pilate by the hue that sears thine hand
Whence all earth's waters cannot wash the brand
That signs thy soul a manslayer's though thou speak
All Christ, with lips most murderous and most meek—
Thou set thy foot where England's used to stand!
Thou reach thy rod forth over Indian land!
Slave of the slaves that call thee lord, and weak
As their foul tongues who praise thee! son of them

Whose presence put the snows and stars to shame
In centuries dead and damned that reek below
Curse-consecrated, crowned with crime and flame,
To them that bare thee like them shalt thou go
Forth of man's life—a leper white as snow.

II.

Call for clear water, wash thine hands, be clean,
Cry, *What is truth?* O Pilate; thou shalt know
Haply too soon, and gnash thy teeth for woe
Ere the outer darkness take thee round unseen
That hides the red ghosts of thy race obscene.
Bound nine times round with hell's most dolorous flow
And in its pools thy crownless head lie low
By his of Spain who dared an English queen
With half a world to hearten him for fight,
Till the wind gave his warriors and their might
To shipwreck and the corpse-encumbered sea;
But thou, take heed, ere yet thy lips wax white,
Lest as it was with Philip so it be,
O white of name and red of hand, with thee

Nor end of torment nor surcease of moan,
Rachel or Rizpah, wofullest of nations,
Crowned with the crowning sign of desolation.

RIZPAH.

HOW many sons, how many generations,
For how long years hast thou bewept, and known

And couldst not even scare off with hand or groan
Those carrion birds devouring bone by bone
The children of thy thousand tribulations?
Thou wast our warrior once; thy sons long dead
Against a foe less foul than this made head,
Poland, in years that sound and shine afar;
Ere the east beheld in thy bright sword-blade's stead
The rotten corpse-light of the Russian star
That lights towards hell his bondslaves and their Czar.

TO LOUIS KOSSUTH.

LIGHT of our fathers' eyes, and in our own
Star of the unsetting sunset! for thy name,
That on the front of noon was as a flame
In the great year nigh twenty years agone
When all the heavens of Europe shook and shone
With stormy wind and lightning, keeps its fame
And bears its witness all day through the same;
Not for past days and great deeds past alone,
Kossuth, we praise thee as our Landor praised,
But that now too we know thy voice upraised,
Thy voice, the trumpet of the truth of God,
Thine hand, the thunder-bearer's, raised to smite
As with heaven's lightning for a sword and rod
Men's heads abased before the Muscovite.

TRANSLATIONS FROM THE FRENCH OF VILLON.

THE COMPLAINT OF THE FAIR ARMOURESS.

1.

MESEEMETH I heard cry and groan
That sweet who was the armourer's maid;
For her young years she made sore moan,
And right upon this wise she said;
"Ah fierce old age with foul bald head,
To spoil fair things thou art over fain;
Who holdeth me? who? would God I were dead!
Would God I were well dead and slain!

2.

"Lo, thou hast broken the sweet yoke
That my high beauty held above
All priests and clerks and merchant-folk;
There was not one but for my love
Would give me gold and gold enough,
Though sorrow his very heart had riven,
To win from me such wage thereof
As now no thief would take if given.

3.

"I was right chary of the same,
God wot it was my great folly,
For love of one sly knave of them,
Good store of that same sweet had he;
For all my subtle wiles, perdie,
God wot I loved him well enow;
Right evilly he handled me,
But he loved well my gold, I trow.

4.

"Though I gat bruises green and black,
I loved him never the less a jot;
Though he bound burdens on my back,
If he said 'Kiss me,' and heed it not,'
Right little pain I felt, God wot,
When that foul thief's mouth, found so sweet,
Kissed me—Much good thereof I got!
I keep the sin and the shame of it.

5.

"And he died thirty year agone.
I am old now, no sweet thing to see;
By God, though, when I think thereon,
And of that good glad time, woe's me,
And stare upon my changed body
Stark naked, that has been so sweet,
Lean, wizen, like a small dry tree,
I am nigh mad with the pain of it.

6.

"Where is my faultless forehead's white
The lifted eyebrows, soft gold hair
Eyes wide apart and keen of sight,
With subtle skill in the amorous air;
The straight nose, great nor small, but fair,
The small carved ears of shapeliest growth,
Chin dimpling, color good to wear,
And sweet red splendid kissing mouth?

7.

"The shapely slender shoulders small,
Long arms, hands wrought in glorious wise,
Round little breasts, the hips withal
High, full of flesh, not scant of size,
Fit for all amorous masteries;
*** ***** *****, *** *** ****** **** ***
******* ******, *** ** ******
** * ***** ****** ** **** *****?

8.

"A writhled forehead, hair gone grey,
Fallen eyebrows, eyes gone blind and red,
Their laughs and looks all fled away,
Yea, all that smote men's hearts are fled;
The bowed nose, fallen from goodlihead;
Foul flapping ears like water-flags;
Peaked chin, and cheeks all waste and dead,
And lips that are two skinny rags:

9.

"Thus endeth all the beauty of us.
The arms made short, the hands made lean,
The shoulders bowed and ruinous,
The breasts, alack! all fallen in;
The flanks too, like the breasts, grown thin
** *** *** ***** *****, *** ** **!
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10.

"So we make moan for the old sweet days,
Poor old light women, two or three
Squatting about the straw-fire's blaze,
The bosom crushed against the knee,
Like fagots on a heap we be,
Round fires soon lit, soon quenched and done;
And we were once so sweet, even we!
Thus fareth many and many an one."

A DOUBLE BALLAD OF GOOD COUNSEL.

Now take your fill of love and glee,
And after balls and banquets hie ;
In the end ye'll get no good for fee,
But just heads broken by and by ;
Light loves make beasts of men that sigh ;
They changed the faith of Solomon,
And left not Samson lights to spy ;
Good luck has he that deals with none !

Sweet Orpheus, lord of minstrelsy,
For this with flute and pipe came nigh
The danger of the dog's heads three
That ravening at hell's door doth lie ;
Fain was Narcissus, fair and shy,
For love's love lightly lost and won,
In a deep well to drown and die ;
Good luck has he that deals with none !

Sardana, flower of chivalry,
Who conquered Crete with horn and cry,
For this was fain a maid to be
And learn with girls the thread to ply ;
King David, wise in prophecy,
Forgot the fear of God for one
Seen washing either shapely thigh ;
Good luck has he that deals with none !

For this did Amnon, craftily
Feigning to eat of cakes of rye,
Deflower his sister fair to see,
Which was foul incest ; and hereby
Was Herod moved, it is no lie,
To lop the head of Baptist John
For dance and jig and psaltery ;
Good luck has he that deals with none !

Next of myself I tell, poor me,
How thrashed like clothes at wash was I
Stark naked, I must needs agree ;
Who made me eat so sour a pie
But Katherine of Vaucelles ? thereby
Noé took third part of that fun ;
Such wedding-gloves are ill to buy ;
Good luck has he that deals with none !

But for that young man fair and free
To pass those young maids lightly by,
Nay, would you burn him quick, not he ·
Like broom-horsed witches though he fry
They are sweet as civet in his eye ;
But trust them, and you're fooled anon ;
For white or brown, and low or high,
Good luck has he that deals with none !

A FRAGMENT ON DEATH.

AND Paris be it or Helen dying,
Who dies soever, dies with pain.
He that lacks breath and wind for sighing,
His gall bursts on his heart ; and then
He sweats, God knows what sweat ! again
No man may ease him of his grief ;
Child, brother, sister, none were fain
To bail him thence for his relief.

Death makes him shudder, swoon, wax pale,
Nose bend, veins stretch, and breath surrender,
Neck swell, flesh soften, joints that fail
Crack their strained nerves and arteries slender.
O woman's body found so tender,
Smooth, sweet, so precious in men's eyes,
Must thou too bear such count to render?
Yes; or pass quick into the skies.

† [In the original here follows Villon's masterpiece, the matchless *Ballad of the Ladies of Old Times*, so incomparably rendered in the marvellous version of Mr. Rossetti; followed in its turn by the succeeding poem, as inferior to its companion as is my attempt at translation of it to his triumph in that higher and harder field.—A. C. S.]

BALLAD OF THE LORDS OF OLD TIME.

AFTER THE FORMER ARGUMENT.

WHAT more? Where is the third Calixt,
Last of that name now dead and gone,
Who held four years the Papalist?
Alphonso king of Aragon,
The gracious lord, duke of Bourbon,
And Arthur, duke of old Britaine?
And Charles the Seventh, that worthy one?
Even with the good knight Charlemain.

The Scot too, king of mount and mist,
With half his face vermilion,
Men tell us, like an amethyst
From brow to chin that blazed and shone;
The Cypriote king of old renown,
Alas! and that good king of Spain,
Whose name I cannot think upon?
Even with the good knight Charlemain.

No more to say of them I list;
'Tis all but vain, all dead and done:
For death may no man born resist,
Nor make appeal when death comes on.
I make yet one more question;
Where's Lancelot, king of far Bohain?
Where's he whose grandson called him son?
Even with the good knight Charlemain.

Where is Guesclin, the good Breton?
The lord of the eastern mountain-chain,
And the good late duke of Alençon?
Even with the good knight Charlemain.

BALLAD OF THE WOMEN OF PARIS.

ALBEIT the Venice girls get praise
For their sweet speech and tender air,
And tho' the old women have wise ways
Of chaffering for amorous ware,
Yet at my peril dare I swear,
Search Rome, where God's grace mainly tarries,
Florence and Savoy, everywhere,
There's no good girl's lip out of Paris.

The Naples women, as folk prattle,
Are sweetly spoken and subtle enough:
German girls are good at tattle,
And Prussians make their boast thereof;
Take Egypt for the next remove,
Or that waste land the Tartar harries,
Spain or Greece, for the matter of love,
There's no good girl's lip out of Paris.

Breton and Swiss know nought of the matter,
Gascony girls or girls of Toulouse;
Two fishwomen with a half hour's chatter
Would shut them up by threes and twos;
Calais, Lorraine, and all their crews,

(Names enow the mad song marries)
England and Picardy, search them and choose,
There's no good girl's lip out of Paris.

Prince, give praise to our French ladies
For the sweet sound their speaking carries;
'Twixt Rome and Cadiz many a maid is,
But no good girl's lip out of Paris.

BALLAD WRITTEN FOR A BRIDEGROOM

WHICH VILLON GAVE TO A GENTLEMAN NEWLY MARRIED TO SEND TO HIS WIFE WHOM HE HAD WON WITH THE SWORD.

At daybreak, when the falcon claps his wings,
No whit for grief, but noble heart and high,
With loud glad noise he stirs himself and springs,
And takes his meat and toward his lure draws nigh;
Such good I wish you! Yea, and heartily
I am fired with hope of true love's meed to get;
Know that Love writes it in his book; for why,
This is the end for which we twain are met.

Mine own heart's lady with no gainsayings
You shall be always wholly till I die;
And in my right against all bitter things
Sweet laurel with fresh rose its force shall try;
Seeing reason wills not that I cast love by
(Nor here with reason shall I chide or fret)
Nor cease to serve, but serve more constantly;
This is the end for which we twain are met.

And, which is more, when grief about me clings
Through Fortune's fit and fume of jealousy,
Your sweet kind eye beats down her threatenings
As wind doth smoke; such power sits in your eye.
Thus in your field my seed of harvestry
Thrives, for the fruit is like me that I set;
God bids me tend it with good husbandry;
This is the end for which we twain are met.

Princess, give ear to this my summary;
That heart of mine your heart's love should forget,
Shall never be; like trust in you put I:
This is the end for which we twain are met.

BALLAD AGAINST THE ENEMIES OF FRANCE.

May he fall in with beasts that scatter fire,
Like Jason, when he sought the fleece of gold,
Or change from man to beast three years entire,
As King Nebuchadnezzar did of old;
Or else have times as shameful and as bad
As Trojan folk for ravished Helen had;
Or gulfed with Proserpine and Tantalus
Let hell's deep fen devour him dolorous,
With worse to bear than Job's worst sufferance,
Bound in his prison-maze with Dædalus,
Who could wish evil to the state of France!

May he four months, like bitterns in the mire,
Howl with head downmost in the lake-springs cold,

Or to bear harness like strong bulls for hire
To the Great Turk for money down be sold ;
Or thirty years like Magdalen live sad,
With neither wool nor web of linen clad ;
Drown like Narciss', or swing down pendulous
Like Absalom with locks luxurious,
Or liker Judas fallen to reprobance ;
Or find such death as Simon sorcerous,
Who could wish evil to the state of France!

May the old times come of fierce Octavian's ire,
And in his belly molton coin be told ;
May he like Victor in the mill expire,
Crushed between moving millstones on him rolled,
Or in deep sea drenched breathless, more adrad
Than in the whale's bulk Jonas, when God bade :
From Phœbus' light, from Juno's treasure-house
Driven, and from joys of Venus amorous,
And cursed of God most high to the utterance,
As was the Syrian king Antiochus,
Who could wish evil to the state of France !

ENVOY.

Prince, may the bright-winged brood of Æolus
To sea-king Glaucus' wild wood cavernous
Bear him bereft of peace and hope's least glance,
For worthless is he to get good of us,
Who could wish evil to the state of France !

THE DISPUTE OF THE HEART AND BODY OF FRANÇOIS VILLON.

WHO is this I hear?—Lo, this is I, thine heart,
That holds on merely now by a slender string.
Strength fails me, shape and sense are rent apart,
The blood in me is turned to a bitter thing,
Seeing thee skulk here like a dog shivering.—
Yea, and for what?—For that thy sense found sweet.—
What irks it thee?—I feel the sting of it.—
Leave me at peace.—Why?—Nay now, leave me at peace ;
I will repent when I grow ripe in wit.—
I say no more.—I care not though thou cease.—
What art thou, trow?—A man worth praise, perfay.—
This is thy thirtieth year of wayfaring.—
'Tis a mule's age.—Art thou a boy still?—Nay.—
Is it hot lust that spurs thee with its sting,
Grasping thy throat? Know'st thou not anything?—
Yea, black and white, when milk is specked with flies,
I can make out.—No more?—Nay, in no wise.
Shall I begin again the count of these?—
Thou art undone.—I will make shift to rise.—
I say no more.—I care not though thou cease.—

I have the sorrow of it, and thou the smart.
Wert thou a poor mad fool or weak of wit,
Then might'st thou plead this pretext with thine heart ;
But if thou know not good from evil a whit,
Either thy head is hard as stone to hit,
Or shame, not honor, gives thee most content.
What canst thou answer to this argument?—
When I am dead I shall be well at ease.—
God! what good luck?—Thou art over eloquent.—
I say no more.—I care not though thou cease.—

Whence is this ill?—From sorrow and not from sin.
When Saturn packed my wallet up for me
I well believe he put these ills therein.—
Fool, wilt thou make thy servant lord of thee?
Hear now the wise King's counsel ; thus saith he ;
All power upon the stars a wise man hath ;

There is no planet that shall do him scathe.—
Nay, as they made me I grow and I decrease.—
What say'st thou ?—Truly this is all my faith.—
I say no more.—I care not though thou cease.—

Would'st thou live still ?—God help me that I may !—
Then thou must—What ? turn pentitent and pray ?—
Read always —What ?—Grave words and good to say ;
Leave off the ways of fools, lest they displease.—
Good ; I will do it.—Wilt thou remember ?—Yea.—
Abide not till there come an evil day.
I say no more.—I care not though thou cease.—

EPISTLE IN FORM OF A BALLAD TO HIS FRIENDS.

HAVE pity, pity, friends, have pity on me,
Thus much at least, may it please you, of your grace !
I lie not under hazel or hawthorn-tree
Down in this dungeon ditch, mine exile's place
By leave of God and fortune's foul disgrace.
Girls, lovers, glad young folk and newly wed,
Jumpers and jugglers, tumbling heel o er head,
Swift as a dart, and sharp as needle-ware,
Throats clear as bells that ring the kine to shed,
Your poor old friend, what, will you leave him there ?

Singers that sing at pleasure, lawlessly,
Light, laughing, gay of word and deed, that race
And run like folk light-witted as ye be
And have in hand nor current coin nor base,
Ye wait too long, for now he's dying apace.
Rhymers of lays and roundels sung and read,
Ye'll brew him broth too late when he lies dead.
Nor wind nor lightning, sunbeam nor fresh air,
May pierce the thick wall's bound where lies his bed ;
Your poor old friend, what, will you leave him there ?

O noble folk from tithes and taxes free,
Come and behold him in this piteous case,
Ye that nor king nor emperor holds in fee,
But only God in heaven : behold his face
Who needs must fast, Sundays and holidays,
Which makes his teeth like rakes ; and when he hath fed
With never a cake for banquet but dry bread,
Must drench his bowels with much cold watery fare,
With board nor stool, but low on earth instead ;
Your poor old friend, what, will you leave him there ?

Princes afore-named, old and young foresaid,
Get me the king's seal and my pardon sped,
And hoist me in some basket up with care :
So swine will help each other ill bested,
For where one squeaks they run in heaps ahead.
Your poor old friend, what, will you leave him there ?

THE EPITAPH IN FORM OF A BALLAD

WHICH VILLON MADE FOR HIMSELF AND HIS COMRADES, EXPECTING TO BE HANGED ALONG WITH THEM.

MEN, brother men, that after us yet live,
Let not your hearts too hard aginst us be ;
For if some pity of us poor men ye give,
The sooner God shall take of you pity.
Here we are five or six strung up, you see,
And here the flesh that all too well we fed
Bit by bit eaten and rotten, rent and shred,
And we the bones grow dust and ash withal ;
Let no man laugh at us discomforted,
But pray to God that he forgive us all.

If we call on you, brothers, to forgive,
Ye should not hold our prayer in scorn, though we
Were slain by law ; ye know that all alive

Have not wit alway to walk righteously ;
Make therefore intercession heartily
With him that of a virgin's womb was bred,
That his grace be not as a dry well-head
For us, nor let hell's thunder on us fall ;
We are dead, let no man harry or vex us dead,
But pray to God that he forgive us all.

The rain has washed and laundered us all five,
And the sun dried and blackened; yea, perdie,
Ravens and pies with beaks that rend and rive
Have dug our eyes out, and plucked off for fee
Our beards and eyebrows ; never are we free,
Not once, to rest ; but here and there still speed,
Drive at its wild will by the wind's change led,
More pecked of birds than fruits on garden-wall ;
Men, for God's love, let no gibe here be said,
But pray to God that he forgive us all.

Prince Jesus, that of all art lord and head,
Keep us, that hell be not our bitter bed ;
We have nought to do in such a master's hall.
Be not ye therefore of our fellowhead,
But pray to God that he forgive us all.

THE CHILDREN OF THE POOR.

FROM THE FRENCH OF VICTOR HUGO.

Take heed of this small child of earth ;
He is great : he hath in him God most high.
Children before their fleshly birth
Are lights alive in the blue sky.

In our light bitter world of wrong
They come ; God gives us them awhile.
His speech is in their stammering tongue,
And his forgiveness in their smile.

Their sweet light rests upon our eyes
Alas ! their right to joy is plain.
If they are hungry, Paradise
Weeps, and, if cold, Heaven thrills with pain.

The want that saps their sinless flower
Speaks judgment on sin's ministers.
Man holds an angel in his power.
Ah ! deep in Heaven what thunder stirs,

When God seeks out these tender things
Whom in the shadow where we sleep
He sends us clothed about with wings,
And find them ragged babes that weep !

NOCTURNE.

La nuit écoute et se penche sur l'onde
Pour y cueillir rien qu'un souffle d'amour;
Pas de lueur, pas de musique au monde,
Pas de sommeil pour moi ni de séjour.
O mère, ô Nuit, de ta source profonde
Verse-nous, verse enfin l'oubli du jour.
Verse l'oubli de l'angoisse et du jour;
Chante; ton chant assoupit l'âme et l'onde:
Fais de ton sein pour mon âme un séjour,
Elle est bien lasse, ô mère, de ce monde,
Où le baiser ne veut pas dire amour,
Où l'âme aimée est moins que toi profonde.

Car toute chose aimée est moins profonde,
O Nuit, que toi, fille et mère du jour;
Toi dont l'attente est le répit du monde,
Toi dont le souffle est plein de mots d'amour,
Toi dont l'haleine enfle et réprime l'onde,
Toi dont l'ombre a tout le ciel pour séjour.

La misère humble et lasse, sans séjour,
S'abrite et dort sous ton aile profonde;
Tu fais à tous l'aumône de l'amour;
Toutes les soifs viennent boire à ton onde,
Tout ce qui pleure et se dérobe au jour,
Toutes les faims et tous les maux du monde.

Moi seul je veille et ne vois dans ce monde
Que ma douleur qui n'ait point de séjour
Où s'abriter sur ta rive profonde
Et s'endormir sous tes yeux loin du jour;
Je vais toujours cherchant au bord de l'onde
Le sang du beau pied blessé de l'amour.

La mer est sombre où tu naquis, amour,
Pleine des pleurs et des sanglots du monde;
On ne voit plus le gouffre où nait le jour
Luire et frémir sous ta leuer profonde;
Maisdans les cœurs d'homme où tu fais séjour
La douleur monte et baisse comme une onde.

ENVOI.

Fille de l'onde et mère de l'amour,
Du haut séjour plein de ta paix profonde
Sur ce bas monde épands un peu de jour.

THEOPHILE GAUTIER.

POUR mettre une couronne au front d'une chanson,
Il semblait qu'en passant son pied semât des roses,
Et que sa main cueillît comme des fleurs écloses
Les étoiles au fond du ciel en floraison.

Sa parole de marbre et d'or aviat le son
Desclaironsde l'été chassant les jours moroses;
Comme en Thrace Apollon banni des grands cieux roses,
Il regardait du cœur l'Olympe, sa maison.

Le soleil fut pour lui le soleil du vieux monde,
Et son œil recherchait dans les flots embrasés
Le sillon immortel d'où s'élança sur l'onde
Vénus, que la mer molle enivrait de baisers:
Enfin, dieu ressaisi de sa splendeur prmeière,
Il trône, et son sépulcre est bâti de lumière.

ODE.

(LE TOMBEAU DE THEOPHILE GAUTIER.)

QUELLE fleur, ô Mort, quel joyau, quel chant,
Quel vent, quel rayon de soleil couchant,
Sur ton front penché, sur ta main avide,
Sur l'âpre pâleur de ta l'èvre aride,
Vibre encore et luit?
Ton sein est sans lait, ton oreille est vide,
Ton œil plein de nuit.

Ta bouche est sans souffle et ton front sans ride;
Mais l'éclair voilé d'une flamme humide,
Flamme éclose au cœur d'un ciel pluvieux,
Rallume ta lèvre et remplit tes yeux
De lueurs d'opale;
Ta bouche est vermeille et ton front joyeux,
O toi qui fus pâle.

Comme aux iours divins la mère des dieux,
Reine au sein fécond, au corps radieux,
Tu surgis au bord de la tombe amère;
Tu nous apparais, ô Mort, vierge et mère,
Effroi des humains,
Le divin laurier sur la tête altière
Et la lyre aux mains.

Nous reconnaissons, courbés vers la terre,
Que c'est la splendeur de ta face austère
Qui dore la nuit de nos longs malheurs;
Que la vie ailée aux mille couleurs,
Dont tu n'es que l'âme,
Refait par tes mains les prés et les fleurs,
La rose et la femme.

Lune constante! astre ami des douleurs
Qui luis à travers la brume des pleurs!
Quelle flamme au fond de ta clarté molle
Eclate et rougit, nouvelle auréole,
Ton doux front voilé?
Quelle étoile, ouvrant ses ailes, s'envole
Du ciel étoilé?

Pleurant ce rayon de jour qu'on lui vole,
L'homme exècre en vain la Mort triste et folle;
Mais l'astre qui fut à nos yeux si beau,
Là-haut, loin d'ici, dans un ciel nouveau
Plein d'autres étoiles,
Se lève, et pour lui la nuit du tombeau
Entr'ouvre ses voiles.

L'âme est dans le corps comme un jeune oiseau
Dont l'aile s'agite au bord du berceau;
La mort, déliant cette aile inquiète,
Quand nous écoutons la bouche muette
Qui nous dit adieu,
Fait de l'homme infime et sombre un poëte,
Du poëte un dieu.

IN OBITUM THEOPHILI POETÆ.

O LUX Pieridum et laurigeri deliciæ dei,
Vox leni Zephyro lenior, ut veris amans novi
Tollit floridulis implicitum primitiis caput,
Ten' ergo abripuit non rediturum, ut redeunt novo
Flores vere novi, te quoque mors irrevocabilem?
Cur vatem neque te Musa parens, te neque Gratiæ,
Nec servare sibi te potuit fidum animi Venus?
Quæ nunc ipsa magis vel puero te Cinyreïo,
Te desiderium et flebilibus lumen amoribus,
Amissum queritur, sanguineis fusa comam genis.
Tantis tu lacrymis digne, comes dulcis Apollini,
Carum nomen eris dîs superis atque sodalibus
Nobis, quîs eadem quæ tibi vivo patuit via
Non æquis patet, at te sequimur passibus haud tuis,
At mæsto cinerem carmine non illacrymabilem
Tristesque exuvias floribus ac fletibus integris
Unà contegimus, nec citharâ nec sine tibiâ,
Votoque unanimæ vocis Ave dicimus et Vale.

AD CATULLUM.

CATULLE frater, ut velim comes tibi
Remota per vireta, per cavum nemus
Sacrumque Ditis haud inhospiti specus,
Pedem referre, trans aquam Stygis ducem
Secutus unum et unicum, Catulle, te,
Ut ora vatis optimi reviserem,
Tui meique vatis ora, quem scio
Venustiorem adîsse vel tuo lacum,
Benigniora semper arva vel tuis,
Ubi serenus accipit suos deus,
Tegitque myrtus implicata laureâ,
Manuque mulcet halituque consecrat
Fovetque blanda mors amabili sinu,
Et ore fama fervido colit viros
Alitque qualis unus ille par tibi
Britannus unicusque in orbe præstitit
Amicus ille noster, ille ceteris
Poeta major, omnibusque floribus
Priore Landor inclytum rosâ caput
Revinxit extulitque, quam tuâ manu
Recepit ac refovit integram suâ.

DEDICATION.

1878.

SOME nine years gone, as we dwelt together
In the sweet hushed heat of the south French weather
Ere autumn fell on the vine-tressed hills
Or the season had shed one rose-red feather,

Friend, whose fame is a flame that fills
All eyes it lightens and hearts it thrills
With joy to be born of the blood which bred
From a land that the grey sea girds and chills

The heart and spirit and hand and head
Whose might is as light on a dark day shed,
On a day now dark as a land's decline
Where all the peers of your praise are dead;

In a land and season of corn and vine
I pledged you a health from a beaker of mine
But half-way filled to the lip's edge yet
With hope for honey and song for wine.

Nine years have risen and eight years set
Since there by the wellspring our hands on it met:
And the pledge of my songs that were then to be,
I could wonder not, friend, though a friend should forget.

For life's helm rocks to the windward and lee,
And time is as wind, and as waves are we;
And song is as foam that the sea-winds fret,
Though the thought at its heart should be deep as the sea.

POEMS AND BALLADS.

THIRD SERIES.

[To William Bell Scott, Poet and Painter, I dedicate these poems. In memory of many years.]

MARCH: AN ODE.

1887.

I.

ERE frost-flower and snow-blossom faded and fell, and the splendour of winter had passed out of sight,
The ways of the woodlands were fairer and stranger than dreams that fulfil us in sleep with delight;
The breath of the mouths of the winds had hardened on tree-tops and branches that glittered and swayed
Such wonders and glories of blossomlike snow or of frost that outlightens all flowers till it fade
That the sea was not lovelier than here was the land, nor the night than the day, nor the day than the night,
Nor the winter sublimer with storm than the spring: such mirth had the madness and might in thee made,
March, master of winds, bright minstrel and marshal of storms that enkindle the season they smite.

II.

And now that the rage of thy rapture is satiate with revel and ravin and spoil of the snow,
And the branches it brightened are broken, and shattered the tree-tops that only thy wrath could lay low,
How should not thy lovers rejoice in thee, leader and lord of the year that exults to be born
So strong in thy strength and so glad in thy gladness whose laughter puts winter and sorrow to scorn?
Thou hast shaken the snows from thy wings, and the frost on thy forehead is molten: thy lips are aglow
As a lover's that kindle with kissing, and earth, with her raiment and tresses yet wasted and torn,
Takes breath as she smiles in the grasp of thy passion to feel through her spirit the sense of thee flow.

III.

Fain, fain would we see but again for an hour what the wind and the sun have dispelled and consumed,
Those full deep swan-soft feathers of snow with whose luminous burden the branches implumed
Hung heavily, curved as a half-bent bow, and fledged not as birds are, but petalled as flowers,
Each tree-top and branchlet a pinnacle jewelled and carved, or a fountain that shines as it showers,
But fixed as a fountain is fixed not, and wrought not to last till by time or by tempest entombed,
As a pinnacle carven and gilded of men: for the date of its doom is no more than an hour's,
One hour of the sun's when the warm wind wakes him to wither the snow-flowers that froze as they bloomed.

IV.

As the sunshine quenches the snowshine; as April subdues thee, and yields up his kingdom to May;
So time overcomes the regret that is born of delight as it passes in passion away,
And leaves but a dream for desire to rejoice in or mourn for with tears or thanksgivings; but thou,
Bright god that art gone from us, maddest and gladdest of months, to what goal hast thou gone from us now?

For somewhere surely the storm of thy laughter that lightens, the beat of thy wings that play,
Must flame as a fire through the world, and the heavens that we know not rejoice in thee: surely thy brow
Hath lost not its radiance of empire, thy spirit the joy that impelled it on quest as for prey.

V.

Are thy feet on the ways of the limitless waters, thy wings on the winds of the waste north sea?
Are the fires of the false north dawn over heavens where summer is stormful and strong like thee
Now bright in the sight of thine eyes? are the bastions of icebergs assailed by the blast of thy breath?
Is it March with the wild north world when April is waning? the word that the changed year saith,
Is it echoed to northward with rapture of passion reiterate from spirits triumphant as we
Whose hearts were uplift at the blast of thy clarions as men's rearisen from a sleep that was death
And kindled to life that was one with the world's and with thine? hast thou set not the whole world free?

VI.

For the breath of thy lips is freedom, and freedom's the sense of thy spirit, the sound of thy song,
Glad god of the north-east wind, whose heart is as high as the hands of thy kingdom are strong,
Thy kingdom whose empire is terror and joy, twin-featured and fruitful of births divine,
Days lit with the flame of the lamps of the flowers, and nights that are drunken with dew for wine,
And sleep not for joy of the stars that deepen and quicken, a denser and fierier throng,
And the world that thy breath bade whiten and tremble rejoices at heart as they strengthen and shine,
And earth gives thanks for the glory bequeathed her, and knows of thy reign that it wrought not wrong.

VII.

Thy spirit is quenched not, albeit we behold not thy face in the crown of the steep sky's arch,
And the bold first buds of the whin wax golden, and witness arise of the thorn and the larch:
Wild April, enkindled to laughter and storm by the kiss of the wildest of winds that blow,
Calls loud on his brother for witness; his hands that were laden with blossom are sprinkled with snow,
And his lips breathe winter, and laugh, and relent; and the live woods feel not the frost's flame parch;
For the flame of the spring that consumes not but quickens is felt at the heart of the forest aglow,
And the sparks that enkindled and fed it were strewn from the hands of the gods of the winds of March.

THE COMMONWEAL.

1887.

I.

EIGHT hundred years and twenty-one
Have shone and sunken since the land
Whose name is freedom bore such brand
As marks a captive, and the sun
Beheld her fettered hand.

II.

But ere dark time had shed as rain
Or sown on sterile earth as seed
That bears no fruit save tare and weed
An age and half an age again,
She rose on Runnymede.

III.

Out of the shadow, starlike still,
She rose up radiant in her right,
And spake, and put to fear and flight
The lawless rule of aweless will
That pleads no right save might.

IV.

Nor since hath England ever borne
The burden laid on subject lands,
The rule that curbs and binds all hands
Save one, and marks for servile scorn
The heads it bows and brands.

V.

A commonweal arrayed and crowned
With gold and purple, girt with steel
At need, that foes must fear or feel,
We find her, as our fathers found,
Earth's lordliest commonweal.

VI.

And now that fifty years are flown
Since in a maiden's hand the sign
Of empire that no seas confine
First as a star to seaward shone,
We see their record shine.

VII.

A troubled record, foul and fair,
A simple record and serene,
Inscribes for praise a blameless queen,
For praise and blame an age of care
And change and ends unseen.

VIII.

Hope, wide of eye and wild of wing,
Rose with the sundawn of a reign
Whose grace should make the rough ways plain,
And fill the worn old world with spring,
And heal its heart of pain.

IX.

Peace was to be on earth; men's hope
Was holier than their fathers had,
Their wisdom not more wise than glad:
They saw the gates of promise ope,
And heard what love's lips bade.

X.

Love armed with knowledge, winged and wise
Should hush the wind of war, and see,
They said, the sun of days to be
Bring round beneath serener skies
A stormless jubilee.

XI.

Time, in the darkness unbeholden
That hides him from the sight of fear
And lets but dreaming hope draw near,
Smiled and was sad to hear such golden
Strains hail the all-golden year.

XII.

Strange clouds have risen between, and wild
Red stars of storm that lit the abyss
Wherein fierce fraud and violence kiss
And mock such promise as beguiled
The fiftieth year from this.

XIII.

War upon war, change after change,
Hath shaken thrones and towers to dust,
And hopes austere and faiths august
Have watched in patience stern and strange
Men's works unjust and just.

XIV.

As from some Alpine watch-tower's portal
Night, living yet, looks forth for dawn,
So from time's mistier mountain lawn
The spirit of man, in trust immortal,
Yearns toward a hope withdrawn.

XV.

The morning comes not, yet the night
Wanes, and men's eyes win strength to see
Where twilight is, where light shall be
When conquered wrong and conquering right
Acclaim a world set free.

XVI.

Calm as our mother-land, the mother
Of faith and freedom, pure and wise,
Keeps watch beneath unchangeful skies,
When hath she watch the woes of other
Strange lands with alien eyes?

XVII.

Calm as she stands alone, what nation
Hath lacked an alms from English hands
What exiles from what stricken lands
Have lacked the shelter of the station
Where higher than all she stands?

XVIII.

Though time discrown and change dismantle
The pride of thrones and towers that frown,
How should they bring her glories down—
The sea cast round her like a mantle,
The sea-cloud like a crown?

XIX.

The sea, divine as heaven and deathless,
Is hers, and none but only she
Hath learnt the sea's word, none but we
Her children hear in heart the breathless
Bright watchword of the sea.

XX.

Heard not of others, or misheard
Of many a land for many a year,
The watchword Freedom fails not here
Of hearts that witness if the word
Find faith in England's ear.

XXI.

She, first to love the light, and daughter
Incarnate of the northern dawn,
She, round whose feet the wild waves fawn
When all their wrath of warring water
Sounds like a babe's breath drawn,

XXII.

How should not she best know, love best,
And best of all souls understand
The very soul of freedom, scanned
Far off, sought out in darkling quest
By men at heart unmanned?

XXIII.

They climb and fall, ensnared, enshrouded,
By mists of words and toils they set
To take themselves, till fierce regret
Grows mad with shame, and all their clouded
Red skies hang sunless yet.

XXIV.

But us the sun, not wholly risen
Nor equal now for all, illumes
With more of light than cloud that looms;
Of light that leads forth souls from prison
And breaks the seals of tombs.

XXV.

Did not her breasts who reared us rear
Him who took heaven in hand, and weighed
Bright world with world in balance laid?
What Newton's might could make not clear
Hath Darwin's might not made?

XXVI.

The forces of the dark dissolve,
The doorways of the dark are broken:
The word that casts out night is spoken,
And whence the springs of things evolve
Light born of night bears token.

XXVII.

She, loving light for light's sake only,
And truth for only truth's, and song
For song's sake and the sea's, how long
Hath she not borne the world her lonely
Witness of right and wrong?

XXVIII.

From light to light her eyes imperial
Turn, and require the further light,
More perfect than the sun's in sight,
Till star and sun seem all funereal
Lamps of the vaulted night.

XXIX.

She gazes till the strenuous soul
Within the rapture of her eyes
Creates or bids awake, arise,
The light she looks for, pure and whole
And worshipped of the wise.

XXX.

Such sons are hers, such radiant hands
Have borne abroad her lamp of old,
Such mouths of honey-dropping gold
Have sent across all seas and lands
Her fame as music rolled.

XXXI.

As music made of rolling thunder
That hurls through heaven its heart sublime,
Its heart of joy, in charging chime,
So ring the songs that round and under
Her temple surge and climb.

XXXII.

A temple not by men's hands builded,
But moulded of the spirit, and wrought
Of passion and imperious thought;
With light beyond all sunlight gilded,
Whereby the sun seems nought.

XXXIII.

Thy shrine, our mother, seen for fairer
Than even thy natural face, made fair
With kisses of thine April air
Even now, when spring thy banner-bearer
Took up thy sign to bear;

XXXIV.

Thine annual sign from heaven's own arch
Given of the sun's hand into thine,
To rear and cheer each wildwood shrine
But now laid waste by wild-winged March,
March, mad with wind like wine.

XXXV.

From all thy brightening downs whereon
The windy seaward whin-flower shows
Blossom whose pride strikes pale the rose
Forth is the golden watchword gone
Whereat the world's face glows.

XXXVI.

Thy quickening woods rejoice and ring
Till earth seems glorious as the sea:
With yearning love too glad for glee
The world's heart quivers toward the spring
As all our hearts toward thee.

XXXVII.

Thee, mother, thee, our queen, who givest
Assurance to the heavens most high
And earth whereon her bondsmen sigh
That by the sea's grace while thou livest
Hope shall not wholly die.

XXXVIII.

That while thy free folk hold the van
Of all men, and the sea-spray shed
As dew more heavenly on thy head
Keeps bright thy face in sight of man,
Man's pride shall drop not dead.

XXXIX.

A pride more pure than humblest prayer,
More wise than wisdom born of doubt,
Girds for thy sake men's hearts about
With thrust and triumph that despair
And fear may cast not out.

XL.

Despair may ring men's hearts, and fear
Bow down their heads to kiss the dust,
Where patriot memories rot and rust,
And change makes faint a nation's cheer,
And faith yields up her trust.

XLI.

Not here this year have true men known,
Not here this year may true men know,
That brand of shame-compelling woe
Which bids but brave men shrink or groan
And lays but honour low.

XLII.

The strong spring wind blows notes of praise,
And hallowing pride of heart, and cheer
Unchanging, toward all true men here
Who hold the trust of ancient days
High as of old this year.

XLIII.

The days that made thee great are dead;
The days that now must keep thee great
Lie not in keeping of thy fate;
In thine they lie, whose heart and head
Sustain thy charge of state.

XLIV.

No state so proud, no pride so just,
The sun, through clouds at sunrise curled
Or clouds across the sunset whirled,
Hath sight of, nor has man such trust
As thine in all the world.

XLV.

Each hour that sees the sunset's crest
Make bright thy shores ere day decline
Sees dawn the sun on shores of thine,
Sees west as east and east as west
On thee their sovereign shine.

XLVI.

The sea's own heart must needs wax proud
To have born the world a child like thee.
What birth of earth might ever be
Thy sister? Time, a wandering cloud,
Is sunshine on thy sea.

XLVII.

Change mars not her; and thee, our mother,
What change that irks or moves thee mars?
What shock that shakes? what chance that jars?
Time gave thee, as he gave none other,
A station like a star's.

XLVIII.

The storm that shrieks, the wind that wages
War with the wings of hopes that climb
Too high toward heaven in doubt sublime,
Assail not thee, approved of ages
The towering crown of time.

XLIX.

Toward thee this year thy children turning
With souls uplift of changeless cheer
Salute with love that casts out fear,
With hearts for beacons round thee burning,
The token of this year.

L.

With just and sacred jubilation
Let earth sound answer to the sea
For witness, blown on winds as free,
How England, how her crowning nation,
Acclaims this jubilee.

THE ARMADA.

1588 : 1888.

I.

1.

ENGLAND, mother born of seamen, daughter fostered of the sea,
Mother more beloved than all who bear not all their children free,
Reared and nursed and crowned and cherished by the sea-wind and the sun,
Sweetest land and strongest, face most fair and mightiest heart in one,
Stands not higher than when the centuries known of earth were less by three,
When the strength that struck the whole world pale fell back from hers undone.

II.

At her feet were the heads of her foes bowed down, and the strengths of the storm of them stayed,
And the hearts that were touched not with mercy with terror were touched and amazed and affrayed:
Yea, hearts that had never been molten with pity were molten with fear as with flame,
And the priests of the Godhead whose temple is hell, and his heart is of iron and fire,
And the swordsmen that served and the seamen that sped them, whom peril could tame not or tire,
Were as foam on the winds of the waters of England which tempest can tire not or tame.

III.

They were girded about with thunder, and lightning came forth of the rage of their strength,
And the measure that measures the wings of the storm was the breadth of their force and their length:
And the name of their might was invincible, covered and clothed with the terror of God;
With his wrath were they winged, with his love were they fired, with the speed of his winds were they shod;
With his soul were they filled, in his trust were they comforted: grace was upon them as night,
And faith as the blackness of darkness: the fume of their balefires was fair in his sight,

The reek of them sweet as a savour of myrrh
in his nostrils: the world that he made,
Theirs was it by gift of his servants: the wind,
if they spake in his name, was afraid,
And the sun was a shadow before it, the stars
were astonished with fear of it: fire
Went up to them, fed with men living, and lit
of men's hands for a shrine or a pyre;
And the east and the west wind scattered their
ashes abroad, that his name should be
blest
Of the tribes of the chosen whose blessings are
curses from uttermost east unto west.

II.

I.

Hell for Spain, and heaven for England,—
God to God, and man to man,—
Met confronted, light with darkness, life with
death: since time began,
Never earth nor sea beheld so great a stake
before them set,
Save when Athens hurled back Asia from
the lists wherein they met;
Never since the sands of ages through the
glass of history ran
Saw the sun in heaven a lordlier day than
this that lights us yet.

II.

For the light that abides upon England, the
glory that rests on her godlike name,
The pride that is love and the love that is
faith, a perfume dissolved in flame,
Took fire from the dawn of the fierce July
when fleets were scattered as foam
And squadrons as flakes of spray; when gal-
leon and galliass that shadowed the sea
Were swept from her waves like shadows that
pass with the clouds they fell from, and
she
Laughed loud to the wind as it gave to
her keeping the glories of Spain and
Rome.

III.

Three hundred summers have fallen as leaves
by the storms in their season thinned,
Since northward the war-ships of Spain came
sheer up the way of the south-west
wind:
Where the citadel cliffs of England are flanked
with bastions of serpentine,
Far off to the windward loomed their hulls,
an hundred and twenty-nine,
All filled full of war, full-fraught with battle
and charged with bale;
Then store-ships weighted with cannon; and
all were an hundred and fifty sail.
The measureless menace of darkness anhun-
gered with hope to prevail upon light,
The shadow of death made substance, the
present and visible spirit of night,
Came, shaped as a waxing or waning moon
that rose with the fall of day,
To the channel where couches the Lion in
guard of the gate of the lustrous bay.
Fair England, sweet as the sea that shields
her, and pure as the sea from stain,
Smiled, hearing hardly for scorn that stirred
her the menace of saintly Spain.

III.

I.

'They that ride over ocean wide with hempen
bridle and horse of tree,'
How shall they in the darkening day of wrath
and anguish and fear go free?
How shall these that have curbed the seas not
feel his bridle who made the sea?

God shall bow them and break them now: for
what is man in the Lord God's sight?
Fear shall shake them, and shame shall break,
and all the noon of their pride be night:
These that sinned shall the ravening wind of
doom bring under, and judgment smite.

England broke from her neck the yoke, and
rent the fetter, and mocked the rod:
Shrines of old that she decked with gold she
turned to dust, to the dust she trod:
What is she, that the wind and sea should
fight beside her, and war with God?

Lo, the cloud of his ships that crowd her chan-
nel's inlet with storm sublime,
Darker far than the tempests are that sweep
the skies of her northmost clime;
Huge and dense as the walls that fence the
secret darkness of unknown time.

Mast on mast as a tower goes past, and sail
by sail as a cloud's wing spread;
Fleet by fleet, as the throngs whose feet keep
time with death in his dance of dread;
Galleons dark as the helmsman's bark of old
that ferried to hell the dead.

Squadrons proud as their lords, and loud with
tramp of soldiers and chant of priests;
Slaves there told by the thousandfold, made
fast in bondage as herded beasts;
Lords and slaves that the sweet free waves
shall feed on, satiate with funeral feasts.

Nay, not so shall it be, they know; their priests
have said it; can priesthood lie?
God shall keep them, their God shall sleep
not: peril and evil shall pass them by:
Nay, for these are his children; seas and winds
shall bid not his children die.

II.

So they boast them, the monstrous host whose
menace mocks at the dawn: and here
They that wait at the wild sea's gate, and
watch the darkness of doom draw near,
How shall they in their evil day sustain the
strength of their hearts for fear?

Full July in the fervent sky sets forth her
twentieth of changing morns:
Winds fall mild that of late waxed wild: no
presage whispers or wails or warns:
Far to west on the bland sea's breast a sailing
crescent uprears her horns.

Seven wide miles the serene sea smiles be-
tween them stretching from rim to rim:
Soft they shine, but a darker sign should bid
not hope or belief wax dim:
God's are these men, and not the sea's: their
trust is set not on her but him.

God's? but who is the God whereto the
prayers and incense of these men rise?
What is he, that the wind and sea should fear
him, quelled by his sunbright eyes?
What, that men should return again, and hail
him Lord of the servile skies?

Hell's own flame at his heavenly name leaps
higher and laughs, and its gulfs rejoice:
Plague and death from his baneful breath
take life and lighten, and praise his
choice:
Chosen are they to devour for prey the tribes
that hear not and fear his voice.

Ay, but we that the wind and sea gird round
with shelter of storms and waves
Know not him that ye worship, grim as
dreams that quicken from dead men's
graves:
God is one with the sea, the sun, the land that
nursed us, the love that saves.

Love whose heart is in ours, and part of all
things noble and all things fair;
Sweet and free as the circling sea, sublime
and kind as the fostering air;
Pure of shame as is England's name, whose
crowns to come are as crowns that were.

IV.

I.

But the Lord of darkness, the God whose
love is a flaming fire,
The master whose mercy fulfils wide hell till
its tortures tire,
He shall surely have heed of his servants who
serve him for love, not hire.

They shall fetter the wing of the wind whose
pinions are plumed with foam:
For now shall thy horn be exalted, and now
shall thy bolt strike home;
Yea, now shall thy kingdom come, Lord God
of the priests of Rome.

They shall cast thy curb on the waters, and
bridle the waves of the sea:
They shall say to her, Peace, be still: and
stillness and peace shall be:
And the winds and the storms shall hear them,
and tremble, and worship thee.

Thy breath shall darken the morning, and
wither the mounting sun;
And the daysprings, frozen and fettered, shall
know thee, and cease to run;
The heart of the world shall feel thee, and die,
and thy will be done.

The spirit of man that would sound thee, and
search out causes of things,

Shall shrink and subside and praise thee: and wisdom, with plume-plucked wings,
Shall cower at thy feet and confess thee, that none may fathom thy springs.

The fountains of song that await but the wind of an April to be
To burst the bonds of the winter, and speak with the sound of a sea,
The blast of thy mouth shall quench them: and song shall be only of thee.

The days that are dead shall quicken, the seasons that were shall return;
And the streets and the pastures of England, the woods that burgeon and yearn,
Shall be whitened with ashes of women and children and men that burn.

For the mother shall burn with the babe sprung forth of her womb in fire,
And bride with bridegroom, and brother with sister, and son with sire;
And the noise of the flames shall be sweet in thine ears as the sound of a lyre.

Yea, so shall thy kingdom be stablished, and so shall the signs of it be:
And the world shall know, and the wind shall speak, and the sun shall see,
That these are the works of thy servants, whose works bear witness to thee.

II.

But the dusk of the day falls fruitless, whose light should have lit them on:
Sails flash through the gloom to shoreward, eclipsed as the sun that shone:
And the west wind wakes with dawn, and the hope that was here is gone.

Around they wheel and around, two knots to the Spaniard's one,
The wind-swift warriors of England, who shoot as with shafts of the sun,
With fourfold shots for the Spaniard's, that spare not till day be done.

And the wind with the sundown sharpens, and hurtles the ships to the lee,
And Spaniard on Spaniard smites, and shatters and yields; and we,
Ere battle begin, stand lords of the battle, acclaimed of the sea.

And the day sweeps round to the nightward; and heavy and hard the waves
Roll in on the herd of the hurtling galleons; and masters and slaves
Reel blind in the grasp of the dark strong wind that shall dig their graves.

For the sepulchres hollowed and shaped of the wind in the swerve of the seas,
The graves that gape for their pasture, and laugh, thrilled through by the breeze,
The sweet soft merciless waters, await and are fain of these.

As the hiss of a Python heaving in menace of doom to be
They hear through the clear night round them whose hours are as clouds that flee,
The whisper of tempest sleeping, the heave and the hiss of the sea.

But faith is theirs, and with faith are they girded and helmed and shod:
Invincible are they, almighty, elect for a sword and a rod;
Invincible even as their God is omnipotent, infinite, God.

In him is their strength, who have sworn that his glory shall wax not dim:
In his name are their war-ships hallowed as mightiest of all that swim:
The men that shall cope with these, and conquer, shall cast out him.

In him is the trust of their hearts; the desire of their eyes is he;
The light of their ways, made lightning for men that would fain be free:
Earth's hosts are with them, and with them is heaven: but with us is the sea.

V.

I.

And a day and a night pass over;
And the heart of their chief swells high;
For England, the warrior, the rover,
Whose banners on all winds fly,
Soul-stricken, he saith, by the shadow of death, holds off him, and draws not nigh.

And the wind and the dawn together
Make in from the gleaming east:
And fain of the wild glad weather
As famine is fain of feast,
And fain of the fight, forth sweeps in its might
the host of the Lord's high priest.

And lightly before the breeze
The ships of his foes take wing:
Are they scattered, the lords of the seas?
Are they broken, the foes of the king?
And ever now higher as a mounting fire the
hopes of the Spaniard spring.

And a windless night comes down:
And a breezeless morning, bright
With promise of praise to crown
The close of the crowning fight,
Leaps up as the foe's heart leaps, and glows
with lustrous rapture of light.

And stinted of gear for battle
The ships of the sea's folk lie,
Unwarlike, herded as cattle,
Six miles from the foeman's eye
That fastens as flame on the sight of them
tame and offenceless, and ranged as to
die.

Surely the souls in them quail,
They are stricken and withered at
heart,
When in on them, sail by sail,
Fierce marvels of monstrous art,
Tower darkening on tower till the sea-winds
cower crowds down as to hurl them apart.

And the windless weather is kindly,
And comforts the host in these;
And their hearts are uplift in them
blindly,
And blindly they boast at ease
That the next day's fight shall exalt them, and
smite with destruction the lords of the
seas.

II.

And lightly the proud hearts prattle,
And lightly the dawn draws nigh,
The dawn of the doom of the battle
When these shall falter and fly;
No day more great in the roll of fate filled
ever within the sky.

To fightward they go as to feastward,
And the tempest of ships that drive
Sets eastward ever and eastward,
Till closer they strain and strive;
And the shots that rain on the hulls of Spain
are as thunders afire and alive.

And about them the blithe sea smiles
And flashes to windward and lee
Round capes and headlands and isles
That heed not if war there be;
Round Sark, round Wight, green jewels of
light in the ring of the golden sea.

But the men that within them abide
Are stout of spirit and stark
As rocks that repel the tide,
As day that repels the dark;
And the light bequeathed from their swords
unsheathed shines lineal on Wight and
on Sark.

And eastward the storm sets ever,
The storm of the sails that strain
And follow and close and sever
And lose and return and gain;
And English thunder divides in sunder the
holds of the ships of Spain.

Southward to Calais, appalled
And astonished, the vast fleet veers;
And the skies are shrouded and palled,
But the moonless midnight hears
And sees how swift on them drive and drift
strange flames that the darkness fears.

They fly through the night from shore-
ward,
Heart-stricken till morning break,
And ever to scourge them forward
Drives down on them England's Drake,
And hurls them in as they hurtle and spin and
stagger, with storm to wake.

VI.

I.

And now is their time come on them.
For eastward they drift and reel,
With the shallows of Flanders ahead,
with destruction and havoc at heel,
With God for their comfort only, the
God whom they serve; and here
Their Lord, of his great loving-kindness,
may revel and make good cheer;

Though ever his lips wax thirstier with drinking, and hotter the lusts in him swell;
For he feeds the thirst that consumes him with blood, and his winepress fumes with the reek of hell.

II.

Fierce noon beats hard on the battle; the galleons that loom to the lee
Bow down, heel over, uplifting their shelterless hulls from the sea:
From scuppers aspirt with blood, from guns dismounted and dumb,
The signs of the doom they looked for, the loud mute witnesses come.
They press with sunset to seaward for comfort: and shall not they find it there?
O servants of God most high, shall his winds not pass you by, and his waves not spare?

III.

The wings of the south-west wind are widened; the breath of his fervent lips,
More keen than a sword's edge, fiercer than fire, falls full on the plunging ships.
The pilot is he of their northward flight, their stay and their steersman he;
A helmsman clothed with the tempest, and girdled with strength to constrain the sea.
And the host of them trembles and quails, caught fast in his hand as a bird in the toils;
For the wrath and the joy that fulfil him are mightier than man's, whom he slays and spoils.
And vainly, with heart divided in sunder, and labour of wavering will,
The lord of their host takes counsel with hope if haply their star shine still,
If haply some light be left them of chance to renew and redeem the fray;
But the will of the black south-wester is lord of the councils of war to-day.
One only spirit it quells not, a splendour undarkened of chance or time;
Be the praise of his foes with Oquendo for ever, a name as a star sublime.
But here what aid in a hero's heart, what help in his hand may be?
For ever the dark wind whitens and blackens the hollows and heights of the sea,
And galley by galley, divided and desolate, founders; and none takes heed,
Nor foe nor friend, if they perish; forlorn, cast off in their uttermost need,
They sink in the whelm of the waters, as pebbles by children from shoreward hurled,
In the North Sea's waters that end not, nor know they a bourn but the bourn of the world.
Past many a secure unavailable harbour, and many a loud stream's mouth,
Past Humber and Tees and Tyne and Tweed, they fly, scourged on from the south,
And torn by the scourge of the storm-wind that smites as a harper smites on a lyre,
And consumed of the storm as the sacrifice loved of their God is consumed with fire,
And devoured of the darkness as men that are slain in the fires of his love are devoured,
And deflowered of their lives by the storms, as by priests is the spirit of life deflowered.
For the wind, of its godlike mercy, relents not, and hounds them ahead to the north,
With English hunters at heel, till now is the herd of them past the Forth,
All huddled and hurtled seaward; and now need none wage war upon these,
Nor huntsmen follow the quarry whose fall is the pastime sought of the seas.
Day upon day upon day confounds them, with measureless mists that swell,
With drift of rains everlasting and dense as the fumes of ascending hell.
The visions of priest and of prophet beholding his enemies bruised of his rod
Beheld but the likeness of this that is fallen on the faithful, the friends of God.
Northward, and northward, and northward they stagger and shudder and swerve and flit,
Dismantled of masts and of yards, with sails by the fangs of the storm-wind split.
But north of the headland whose name is Wrath, by the wrath or the ruth of the sea,
They are swept or sustained to the westward, and drive through the rollers aloof to the lee.
Some strive yet northward for Iceland, and perish: but some through the storm-hewn straits
That sunder the Shetlands and Orkneys are borne of the breath which is God's or fate's:

And some, by the dawn of September, at last
give thanks as for stars that smile,
For the winds have swept them to shelter and
sight of the cliffs of a Catholic isle.
Though many the fierce rocks feed on, and
many the merciless heretic slays,
Yet some that have laboured to land with
their treasure are trustful, and give God
praise.
And the kernes of murderous Ireland, athirst
with a greed everlasting of blood,
Unslakable ever with slaughter and spoil,
rage down as a ravening flood,
To slay and to flay of their shining apparel
their brethren whom shipwreck spares;
Such faith and such mercy, such love and
such manhood, such hands and such
hearts are theirs.
Short shrift to her foes gives England, but
shorter doth Ireland to friends; and worse
Fare they that come with a blessing on treason
than they that come with a curse.
Hacked, harried, and mangled of axes and
skenes, three thousand naked and dead
Bear witness of Catholic Ireland, what sons
of what sires at her breasts are bred.
Winds are pitiful, waves are merciful, tempest
and storm are kind:
The waters that smite may spare, and the
thunder is deaf, and the lightning is blind:
Of these perchance at his need may a man,
though they know it not, yet find grace;
But grace, if another be hardened against him,
he gets not at this man's face.
For his ear that hears and his eye that sees
the wreck and the wail of men,
And his heart that relents not within him, but
hungers, are like as the wolf's in his den.
Worthy are these to worship their master, the
murderous Lord of lies,
Who hath given to the pontiff his servant the
keys of the pit and the keys of the skies.
Wild famine and red-shod rapine are cruel,
and bitter with blood are their feasts;
But fiercer than famine and redder than
rapine the hands and the hearts of priests.
God, God bade these to the battle; and here,
on a land by his servants trod,
They perish, a lordly blood-offering, subdued
by the hands of the servants of God.
These also were fed of his priests with faith,
with the milk of his word and the wine;
These two are fulfilled with the spirit of dark-
ness that guided their quest divine.
And here, cast up from the ravening sea on
the mild land's merciful breast,
This comfort they find of their fellows in
worship; this guerdon is theirs of their
quest.
Death was captain, and doom was pilot, and
darkness the chart of their way;
Night and hell had in charge and in keeping
the host of the foes of day.
Invincible, vanquished, impregnable, shat-
tered, a sign to her foes of fear,
A sign to the world and the stars of laughter,
the fleet of the Lord lies here.
Nay, for none may declare the place of the
ruin wherein she lies;
Nay, for none hath beholden the grave
whence never a ghost shall rise.
The fleet of the foemen of England hath
found not one but a thousand graves;
And he that shall number and name them shall
number by name and by tale the waves.

VII.

I.

Sixtus, Pope of the Church whose hope takes
flight for heaven to dethrone the sun,
Philip, king that wouldst turn our spring to
winter, blasted, appalled, undone,
Prince and priest, let a mourner's feast give
thanks to God for your conquest won.

England's heel is upon you: kneel, O priest,
O prince, in the dust, and cry,
'Lord, why thus? art thou wroth with us
whose faith was great in thee, God most
high?
Whence is this, that the serpent's hiss derides
us? Lord, can thy pledged word lie?

'God of hell, are its flames that swell quenched
now for ever, extinct and dead?
Who shall fear thee? or who shall hear the
word thy servants who feared thee said?
Lord, art thou as the dead gods now, whose
arm is shortened, whose rede is read?

'Yet we thought it was not for nought thy
word was given us, to guard and guide:
Yet we deemed that they had not dreamed
who put their trust in thee. Hast thou
lied?
God our Lord, was the sacred sword we drew
not drawn on thy Church's side?

'England hates thee as hell's own gates; and
England triumphs, and Rome bows
down:
England mocks at thee; England's rocks cast
off thy servants to drive and drown:
England loathes thee; and fame betroths and
plights with England her faith for crown.

'Spain clings fast to thee; Spain, aghast with
anguish, cries to thee; where art thou?
Spain puts trust in thee; lo, the dust that soils
and darkens her prostrate brow!
Spain is true to thy service; who shall raise up
Spain for thy service now?

'Who shall praise thee, if none may raise thy
servants up, nor affright thy foes?
Winter wanes, and the woods and plains for-
get the likeness of storms and snows:
So shall fear of thee fade even here: and what
shall follow thee no man knows.'

Lords of night, who would breathe your blight
on April's morning and August's noon,
God your Lord, the condemned, the abhorred,
sinks hellward, smitten with deathlike
swoon:
Death's own dart in his hateful heart now
thrills, and night shall receive him soon.

God the Devil, thy reign of revel is here for
ever eclipsed and fled:
God the Liar, everlasting fire lays hold at last
on thee, hand and head:
God the Accurst, the consuming thirst that
burns thee never shall here be fed.

II.

England, queen of the waves whose green
inviolate girdle enrings thee round,
Mother fair as the morning, where is now the
place of thy foemen found?
Still the sea that salutes us free proclaims
them stricken, acclaims thee crowned.

Times may change, and the skies grow strange
with signs of treason and fraud and fear:
Foes in union of strange communion may rise
against thee from far and near:
Sloth and greed on thy strength may feed as
cankers waxing from year to year.

Yet, though treason and fierce unreason
should league and lie and defame and
smite,
We that know thee, how far below thee the
hatred burns of the sons of night,
We that love thee, behold above thee the wit-
ness written of life in light.

Life that shines from thee shows forth signs
that none may read not but eyeless
foes:
Hate, born blind, in his abject mind grows
hopeful now but as madness grows:
Love, born wise, with exultant eyes adores thy
glory, beholds and glows.

Truth is in thee, and none may win thee to lie,
forsaking the face of truth:
Freedom lives by the grace she gives thee,
born again from thy deathless youth:
Faith should fail, and the world turn pale,
wert thou the prey of the serpent's
tooth.

Greed and fraud, unabashed, unawed, may
strive to sting thee at heel in vain:
Craft and fear and mistrust may leer and
mourn and murmur and plead and plain:
Thou art thou: and thy sunbright brow is
hers that blasted the strength of Spain.

Mother, mother beloved, none other could
claim in place of thee England's
place:
Earth bears none that beholds the sun so
pure of record, so clothed with grace:
Dear our mother, nor son nor brother is thine,
as strong or as fair of face.

How shalt thou be abased? or how shall fear
take hold of thy heart? of thine,
England, maiden immortal, laden with charge
of life and with hopes divine?
Earth shall wither, when eyes turned hither
behold not light in her darkness shine.

England, none that is born thy son, and lives,
by grace of thy glory, free,
Lives and yearns not at heart and burns with
hope to serve as he worships thee;
None may sing thee: the sea-wind's wing beats
down our songs as it hails the sea.

TO A SEAMEW.

When I had wings, my brother,
Such wings were mine as thine:
Such life my heart remembers
In all as wild Septembers
As this when life seems other,
Though sweet, than once was mine;
When I had wings, my brother,
Such wings were mine as thine.

Such life as thrills and quickens
The silence of thy flight,
Or fills thy note's elation
With lordlier exultation
Than man's, whose faint heart sickens
With hopes and fears that blight
Such life as thrills and quickens
The silence of thy flight.

Thy cry from windward clanging
Makes all the cliffs rejoice;
Though storm clothe seas with sorrow,
Thy call salutes the morrow;
While shades of pain seem hanging
Round earth's most rapturous voice,
Thy cry from windward clanging
Makes all the cliffs rejoice.

We, sons and sires of seamen,
Whose home is all the sea,
What place man may, we claim it;
But thine—whose thought may name it?
Free birds live higher than freemen,
And gladlier ye than we—
We, sons and sires of seamen,
Whose home is all the sea.

For you the storm sounds only
More notes of more delight
Than earth's in sunniest weather:
When heaven and sea together
Join strengths against the lonely
Lost bark borne down by night,
For you the storm sounds only
More notes of more delight.

With wider wing, and louder
Long clarion-call of joy,
Thy tribe salutes the terror
Of darkness, wild as error,
But sure as truth, and prouder
Than waves with man for toy;
With wider wing, and louder
Long clarion-call of joy.

The wave's wing spreads and flutters,
The wave's heart swells and breaks;
One moment's passion thrills it,
One pulse of power fulfils it
And ends the pride it utters
When, loud with life that quakes,
The wave's wing spreads and flutters,
The wave's heart swells and breaks.

But thine and thou, my brother,
Keep heart and wing more high
Than aught may scare or sunder;
The waves whose throats are thunder
Fall hurtling each on other,
And triumph as they die;
But thine and thou, my brother,
Keep heart and wing more high.

More high than wrath or anguish,
More strong than pride or fear,
The sense or soul half hidden
In thee, for us forbidden,
Bids thee nor change nor languish,
But live thy life as here,
More high than wrath or anguish,
More strong than pride or fear.

We are fallen, even we, whose passion
On earth is nearest thine;
Who sing, and cease from flying;
Who live, and dream of dying:
Grey time, in time's grey fashion,
Bids wingless creatures pine:
We are fallen, even we, whose passion
On earth is nearest thine.

The lark knows no such rapture,
Such joy no nightingale,
As sways the songless measure
Wherein thy wings take pleasure:
Thy love may no man capture,
Thy pride may no man quail;
The lark knows no such rapture,
Such joy no nightingale.

And we, whom dreams embolden,
We can but creep and sing
And watch through heaven's waste hollow
The flight no sight may follow
To the utter bourne beholden
Of none that lack thy wing:
And we, whom dreams embolden,
We can but creep and sing.

Our dreams have wings that falter,
  Our hearts bear hopes that die;
For thee no dream could better
A life no fears may fetter,
A pride no care can alter,
  That wots not whence or why
Our dreams have wings that falter,
  Our hearts bear hopes that die.

With joy more fierce and sweeter
  Than joys we deem divine
Their lives by time untarnished,
Are girt about and garnished,
Who match the wave's full metre
  And drink the wind's wild wine
With joy more fierce and sweeter
  Than joys we deem divine.

Ah, well were I for ever,
  Wouldst thou change lives with me,
And take my song's wild honey,
And give me back thy sunny
Wide eyes that weary never,
  And wings that search the sea;
Ah, well were I for ever,
  Wouldst thou change lives with me.

Beachy Head, September, 1886.

PAN AND THALASSIUS.

A LYRICAL IDYL.

THALASSIUS.

PAN!

PAN.

O sea-stray, seed of Apollo,
  What word wouldst thou have with me?
My ways thou wast fain to follow
  Or ever the years hailed thee
    Man.

Now
If August brood on the valleys,
  If satyrs laugh on the lawns,
What part in the wildwood alleys
  Hast thou with the fleet-foot fauns—
    Thou?

See!
Thy feet are a man's—not cloven
  Like these, not light as a boy's:
The tresses and tendrils inwoven
  That lure us, the lure of them cloys
    Thee.

Us
The joy of the wild woods never
  Leaves free of the thirst it slakes:
The wild love throbs in us ever
  That burns in the dense hot brakes
    Thus.

Life,
Eternal, passionate, awless,
  Insatiable, mutable, dear,
Makes all men's law for us lawless:
  We strive not: how should we fear
    Strife?

We,
The birds and the bright winds know not
  Such joys as are ours in the mild
Warm woodland; joys such as grow not
  In waste green fields of the wild
    Sea.

No;
Long since, in the world's wind veering,
  Thy heart was estranged from me:
Sweet Echo shall yield thee not hearing:
  What have we to do with thee?
    Go.

THALASSIUS.

Ay!
Such wrath on thy nostril quivers
  As once in Sicilian heat
Bade herdsmen quail, and the rivers
  Shrank, leaving a path for thy feet
    Dry?

Nay,
Low down in the hot soft hollow
Too snakelike hisses thy spleen:
'O sea-stray, seed of Apollo!'
What ill hast thou heard or seen?
Say.

Man
Knows well, if he hears beside him
The snarl of thy wrath at noon,
What evil may soon betide him,
Or late, if thou smite not soon,
Pan.

Me
The sound of thy flute, that flatters
The woods as they smile and sigh,
Charmed fast as it charms thy satyrs,
Can charm no faster than I
Thee.

Fast
Thy music may charm the splendid
Wide woodland silence to sleep
With sounds and dreams of thee blended
And whispers of waters that creep
Past.

Here
The spell of thee breathes and passes
And bids the heart in me pause,
Hushed soft as the leaves and the grasses
Are hushed if the storm's foot draws
Near.

Yet
The panic that strikes down strangers
Transgressing thy ways unaware
Affrights not me nor endangers
Through dread of thy secret snare
Set.

PAN.

Whence
May man find heart to deride me?
Who made his face as a star
To shine as a God's beside me?
Nay, get thee away from us, far
Hence.

THALASSIUS.

Then
Shall no man's heart, as he raises
A hymn to thy secret head,
Wax great with the godhead he praises:
Thou, God, shalt be like unto dead
Men.

PAN.

Grace
I take not of men's thanksgiving,
I crave not of lips that live;
They die, and behold, I am living,
While they and their dead Gods give
Place.

THALASSIUS.

Yea:
Too lightly the words were spoken
That mourned or mocked at thee dead:
But whose was the word, the token,
The song that answered and said
Nay?

PAN.

Whose
But mine, in the midnight hidden,
Clothed round with the strength of night
And mysteries of things forbidden
For all but the one most bright
Muse?

THALASSIUS.

Hers
Or thine, O Pan, was the token
That gave back empire to thee
When power in thy hands lay broken
As reeds that quake if a bee
Stirs?

PAN.

Whom
Have I in my wide woods need of?
Urania's limitless eyes
Behold not mine end, though they read of
A word that shall speak to the skies
Doom.

THALASSIUS.

She
Gave back to thee kingdom and glory,
And grace that was thine of yore,
And life to thy leaves, late hoary
As weeds cast up from the hoar
Sea.

Song
Can bid faith shine as the morning
Though light in the world be none:
Death shrinks if her tongue sound warning,
Night quails, and beholds the sun
Strong.

PAN.

Night
Bare rule over men for ages
Whose worship wist not of me
And gat but sorrows for wages,
And hardly for tears could see
Light.

Call
No more on the starry presence
Whose light through the long dark swam:
Hold fast to the green world's pleasance:
For I that am lord of it am
All.

THALASSIUS.

God,
God Pan, from the glad wood's portal
The breaths of thy song blow sweet:
But woods may be walked in of mortal
Man's thought, where never thy feet
Trod.

Thine
All secrets of growth and of birth are,
All glories of flower and of tree,
Wheresoever the wonders of earth are;
The words of the spell of the sea
Mine.

A BALLAD OF BATH.

LIKE a queen enchanted who may not laugh or weep,
Glad at heart and guarded from change and care like ours,
Girt about with beauty by days and nights that creep
Soft as breathless ripples that softly shoreward sweep,
Lies the lovely city whose grace no grief deflowers.
Age and grey forgetfulness, time that shifts and veers,
Touch not thee, our fairest, whose charm no rival nears,
Hailed as England's Florence of one whose praise gives grace,
Landor, once thy lover, a name that love reveres:
Dawn and noon and sunset are one before thy face.

Dawn whereof we know not, and noon whose fruit we reap,
Garnered up in record of years that fell like flowers,
Sunset liker sunrise along the shining steep
Whence thy fair face lightens, and where thy soft springs leap,
Crown at once and gird thee with grace of guardian powers.
Loved of men beloved of us, souls that fame inspheres,
All thine air hath music for him who dreams and hears;
Voices mixed of multitudes, feet of friends that pace,
Witness why for ever, if heaven's face clouds or clears,
Dawn and noon and sunset are one before thy face.

Peace hath here found harbourage mild as very sleep:
Not the hills and waters, the fields and wildwood bowers,
Smile or speak more tenderly, clothed with peace more deep,
Here than memory whispers of days our memories keep
Fast with love and laughter and dreams of withered hours.
Bright were these as blossoms of old, and thought endears
Still the fair soft phantoms that pass with smiles or tears,
Sweet as roseleaves hoarded and dried wherein we trace
Still the soul and spirit of sense that lives and cheers:
Dawn and noon and sunset are one before thy face

City lulled asleep by the chime of passing years,
Sweeter smiles thy rest than the radiance round thy peers;
Only love and lovely remembrance here have place.
Time on thee lies lighter than music on men's ears;
Dawn and noon and sunset are one before thy face.

IN A GARDEN.

BABY, see the flowers!
—Baby sees
Fairer things than these,
Fairer though they be than dreams of ours.

Baby, hear the birds!
—Baby knows
Better songs than those,
Sweeter though they sound than sweetest words.

Baby, see the moon!
—Baby's eyes
Laugh to watch it rise,
Answering light with love and night with noon.

Baby, hear the sea!
—Baby's face
Takes a graver grace,
Touched with wonder what the sound may be

Baby, see the star!
—Baby's hand
Opens, warm and bland,
Calm in claim of all things fair that are.

Baby, hear the bells!
—Baby's head
Bows, as ripe for bed,
Now the flowers curl round and close their cells.

Baby, flower of light,
Sleep, and see
Brighter dreams than we,
Till good day shall smile away good night.

A RHYME.

BABE, if rhyme be none
For that sweet small word
Babe, the sweetest one
Ever heard,

Right it is and meet
Rhyme should keep not true
Time with such a sweet
Thing as you.

Meet it is that rhyme
Should not gain such grace;
What is April's prime
To your face?

What to yours is May's
Rosiest smile? what sound
Like your laughter sways
All hearts round?

None can tell in metre
Fit for ears on earth
What sweet star grew sweetest
At your birth.

Wisdom doubts what may be:
Hope, with smile sublime,
Trusts: but neither, baby,
Knows the rhyme.

Wisdom lies down lonely;
Hope keeps watch from far;
None but one seer only
Sees the star.

Love alone, with yearning
Heart for astrolabe,
Takes the star's height, burning
O'er the babe.

BABY-BIRD.

BABY-BIRD, baby-bird,
Ne'er a song on earth
May be heard, may be heard,
Rich as yours in mirth.

All your flickering fingers,
All your twinkling toes,
Play like light that lingers
Till the clear song close.

Baby-bird, baby-bird,
Your grave majestic eyes
Like a bird's warbled words
Speak, and sorrow dies.

Sorrow dies for love's sake,
Love grows one with mirth,
Even for one white dove's sake,
Born a babe on earth.

Baby-bird, baby-bird,
Chirping loud and long,
Other birds hush their words,
Hearkening toward your song.

Sweet as spring though it ring,
Full of love's own lures,
Weak and wrong sounds their song,
Singing after yours.

Baby-bird, baby-bird,
The happy heart that hears
Seems to win back within
Heaven, and cast out fears.

Earth and sun seem as one
Sweet light and one sweet word
Known of none here but one,
Known of one sweet bird.

OLIVE.

I.

Who may praise her?
Eyes where midnight shames the sun,
Hair of night and sunshine spun,
Woven of dawn's or twilight's loom,
Radiant darkness, lustrous gloom,
Godlike childhood's flowerlike bloom,
None may praise aright, nor sing
Half the grace wherewith like spring
Love arrays her.

II.

Love untold
Sings in silence, speaks in light
Shed from each fair feature, bright
Still from heaven, whence toward us, now
Nine years since, she deigned to bow
Down the brightness of her brow,
Deigned to pass through mortal birth:
Reverence calls her, here on earth,
Nine years old.

III.

Love's deep duty,
Even when love transfigured grows
Worship, all too surely knows
How, though love may cast out fear,
Yet the debt divine and dear
Due to childhood's godhead here
May by love of man be paid
Never; never song be made
Worth its beauty.

IV.

Nought is all
Sung or said or dreamed or thought
Ever, set beside it; nought
All the love that man may give—
Love whose prayer should be, 'Forgive!
Heaven, we see, on earth may live;
Earth can thank not heaven, we know,
Save with songs that ebb and flow,
Rise and fall.

V.

No man living,
No man dead, save haply one
Now gone homeward past the sun,
Ever found such grace as might
Tune his tongue to praise aright
Children, flowers of love and light,
Whom our praise dispraises: we
Sing, in sooth, but not as he
Sang thanksgiving.

VI.

Hope that smiled,
Seeing her new-born beauty, made
Out of heaven's own light and shade,
Smiled not half so sweetly: love,
Seeing the sun, afar above,
Warm the nest that rears the dove,
Sees, more bright than moon or sun,
All the heaven of heavens in one
Little child.

VII.

Who may sing her?
Wings of angels when they stir
Make no music worthy her:
Sweeter sound her shy soft words
Here than songs of God's own birds
Whom the fire of rapture girds
Round with light from love's face lit:
Hands of angels find no fit
Gifts to bring her.

VIII.

Babes at birth
Wear as raiment round them cast,
Keep as witness toward their past,
Tokens left of heaven; and each,
Ere its lips learn mortal speech,
Ere sweet heaven pass on pass reach,
Bears in undiverted eyes
Proof of unforgotten skies
Here on earth.

IX.

Quenched as embers
Quenched with flakes of rain or snow
Till the last faint flame burns low,
All those lustrous memories lie
Dead with babyhood gone by:
Yet in her they dare not die:
Others, fair as heaven is, yet,
Now they share not heaven, forget:
She remembers

A WORD WITH THE WIND.

LORD of days and nights that hear thy word of wintry warning,
Wind, whose feet are set on ways that none may tread,
Change the nest wherein thy wings are fledged for flight by morning,
Change the harbour whence at dawn thy sails are spread.
Not the dawn, ere yet the imprisoning night has half released her,
More desires the sun's full face of cheer, than we,
Well as yet we love the strength of the iron-tongued north-easter,
Yearn for wind to meet us as we front the sea.
All thy ways are good, O wind, and all the world should fester,
Were thy fourfold godhead quenched, or stilled thy strife:
Yet the waves and we desire too long the deep south-wester,
Whence the waters quicken shoreward, clothed with life.
Yet the field not made for ploughing save of keels nor harrowing
Save of storm-winds lies unbrightened by thy breath:
Banded broad with ruddy samphire glow the sea-banks narrowing
Westward, while the sea gleams chill and still as death.
Sharp and strange from inland sounds thy bitter note of battle,
Blown between grim skies and waters sullen-souled,
Till the baffled seas bear back, rocks roar and shingles rattle,
Vexed and angered and anhungered and acold.
Change thy note, and give the waves their will, and all the measure,
Full and perfect, of the music of their might,
Let it fill the bays with thunderous notes and throbs of pleasure,
Shake the shores with passion, sound at once and smite.
Sweet are even the mild low notes of wind and sea, but sweeter
Sounds the song whose choral wrath of raging rhyme
Bids the shelving shoals keep tune with storm's imperious metre,
Bids the rocks and reefs respond in rapturous chime.
Sweet the lisp and lulling whisper and luxurious laughter,
Soft as love or sleep, of waves whereon the sun
Dreams, and dreams not of the darkling hours before nor after,
Winged with cloud whose wrath shall bid love's day be done.

Yet shall darkness bring the awakening sea
a lordlier lover,
Clothed with strength more amorous and
more strenuous will,
Whence her heart of hearts shall kindle and
her soul recover
Sense of love too keen to lie for love's
sake still.
Let thy strong south-western music sound,
and bid the billows
Brighten, proud and glad to feel thy
scourge and kiss
Sting and soothe and sway them, bowed as
aspens bend or willows,
Yet resurgent still in breathless rage of
bliss.
All to-day the slow sleek ripples hardly bear
up shoreward,
Charged with sighs more light than laugh-
ter, faint and fair,
Like a woodland lake's weak wavelets lightly
lingering forward,
Soft and listless as the slumber-stricken
air.
Be the sunshine bared or veiled, the sky
superb or shrouded,
Still the waters, lax and languid, chafed
and foiled,
Keen and thwarted, pale and patient, clothed
with fire or clouded,
Vex their heart in vain, or sleep like ser-
pents coiled.

Thee they look for, blind and baffled, wan
with wrath and weary,
Blown for ever back by winds that rock the
bird:
Winds that seamews breast subdue the sea,
and bid the dreary
Waves be weak as hearts made sick with
hope deferred.
Let thy clarion sound from westward, let the
south bear token
How the glories of thy godhead sound and
shine:
Bid the land rejoice to see the land-wind's
broad wings broken,
Bid the sea take comfort, bid the world be
thine.
Half the world abhors thee beating back the
sea, and blackening
Heaven with fierce and woful charge of
fluctuant form:
All the world acclaims thee shifting sail again,
and slackening
Cloud by cloud the close-reefed cordage of
the storm.
Sweeter fields and brighter woods and lordlier
hills than waken
Here at sunrise never hailed the sun and
thee:
Turn thee then, and give them comfort, shed
like rain and shaken
Far as foam that laughs and leaps along
the sea.

NEAP-TIDE.

FAR off is the sea, and the land is afar:
The low banks reach at the sky,
Seen hence, and are heavenward high;
Though light for the leap of a boy they are,
And the far sea late was nigh.

The fair wild fields and the circling downs,
The bright sweet marshes and meads
All glorious with flowerlike weeds,
The great grey churches, the sea-washed towns,
Recede as a dream recedes.

The world draws back, and the world's light
wanes,
As a dream dies down and is dead;
And the clouds and the gleams overhead
Change, and change; and the sea remains,
A shadow of dreamlike dread.

Wild, and woful, and pale, and grey,
A shadow of sleepless fear,
A corpse with the night for bier,
The fairest thing that beholds the day
Lies haggard and hopeless here

And the wind's wings, broken and spent, sub-
side:
And the dumb waste world is hoar,
And strange as the sea the shore;
And shadows of shapeless dreams abide
Where life may abide no more.

A sail to seaward, a sound from shoreward
And the spell were broken that seems
To reign in a world of dreams
Where vainly the dreamer's feet make forward
And vainly the low sky gleams.

The sea-forsaken forlorn deep-wrinkled
Salt slanting stretches of sand
That slope to the seaward hand,
Were they fain of the ripples that flashed and twinkled
And laughed as they struck the strand?

As bells on the reins of the fairies ring
The ripples that kissed them rang,
The light from the sundawn sprang,
And the sweetest of songs that the world may sing
Was theirs when the full sea sang.

Now no light is in heaven; and now
Not a note of the sea-wind's tune
Rings hither: the bleak sky's boon
Grants hardly sight of a grey sun's brow—
A sun more sad than the moon.

More sad than a moon that clouds beleaguer
And storm is a scourge to smite,
The sick sun's shadowlike light
Grows faint as the clouds and the waves wax eager,
And withers away from sight.

The day's heart cowers, and the night's heart quickens:
Full fain would the day be dead
And the stark night reign in his stead:
The sea falls dumb as the sea-fog thickens
And the sunset dies for dread.

Outside of the range of time, whose breath
Is keen as the manslayer's knife
And his peace but a truce for strife,
Who knows if haply the shadow of death
May be not the light of life?

For the storm and the rain and the darkness borrow
But an hour from the suns to be,
But a strange swift passage, that we
May rejoice, who have mourned not to-day, to-morrow,
In the sun and the wind and the sea.

BY THE WAYSIDE.

Summer's face was rosiest, skies and woods were mellow,
Earth had heaven to friend, and heaven had earth to fellow,
When we met where wooded hills and meadows meet.
Autumn's face is pale, and all her late leaves yellow,
Now that here again we greet.

Wan with years whereof this eightieth nears December,
Fair and bright with love, the kind old face I know
Shines above the sweet small twain whose eyes remember
Heaven, and fill with April's light this pale November,
Though the dark year's glass run low.

Like a rose whose joy of life her silence utters
When the birds are loud, and low the lulled wind mutters,
Grave and silent shines the boy nigh three years old.
Wise and sweet his smile, that falters not nor flutters,
Glows, and turns the gloom to gold.

Like the new-born sun's that strikes the dark and slays it,
So that even fo love of light it smiles and dies,
Laughs the boy's blithe face whose fair fourth year arrays it
All with light of life and mirth that stirs and sways it
And fulfils the deep wide eyes.

Wide and warm with glowing laughter's exultation,
Full of welcome, full of sunbright jubilation,
Flash my taller friend's quick eyebeams, charged with glee;
But with softer still and sweeter salutation
Shine my smaller friend's on me.

Little arms flung round my bending neck, that yoke it
Fast in tender bondage, draw my face down too
Toward the flower-soft face whose dumb deep smiles invoke it,
Dumb, but love can read the radiant eyes that woke it,
Blue as June's mid heaven is blue.

How may men find refuge, how should hearts be shielded,
From the weapons thus by little children wielded,
When they lift such eyes as light this lustrous face—
Eyes that woke love sleeping unawares, and yielded,
Love for love, a gift of grace,
Grace beyond man's merit, love that laughs forgiving
Even the sin of being no more a child, nor worth
Trust and love that lavish gifts above man's giving,
Touch or glance of eyes and lips the sweetest living,
Fair as heaven and kind as earth?

NIGHT.

I.

FROM THE ITALIAN OF GIOVANNI STROZZI.

NIGHT, whom in shape so sweet thou here may'st see
Sleeping, was by an Angel sculptured thus
In marble, and since she sleeps hath life like us:
Thou doubt'st? Awake her: she will speak to thee.

II.

FROM THE ITALIAN OF MICHELANGELO BUONARROTI.

Sleep likes me well, and better yet to know
I am but stone. While shame and grief must be,
Good hap is mine, to feel not, nor to see:
Take heed, then, lest thou wake me: ah, speak low.

IN TIME OF MOURNING.

'RETURN,' we dare not as we fain
Would cry from hearts that yearn:
Love dares not bid our dead again
Return.

O hearts that strain and burn
As fires fast fettered burn and strain!
Bow down, lie still, and learn.
The heart that healed all hearts of pain
No funeral rites inurn:
Its echoes, while the stars remain,
Return.

May, 1885.

THE INTERPRETERS.

I.

DAYS dawn on us that make amends for many
Sometimes,
When heaven and earth seem sweeter even than any
Man's rhymes.

Light had not all been quenched in France, or quelled
In Greece,
Had Homer sung not, or had Hugo held
His peace.
Had Sappho's self not left her word thus long
For token,
The sea round Lesbos yet in waves of song
Had spoken.

II.

And yet these days of subtler air and finer
Delight,
When lovelier looks the darkness, and diviner
The light—

The gift they give of all these golden hours,
Whose urn
Pours forth reverberate rays or shadowing showers
In turn—

Clouds, beams, and winds that make the live day's track
Seem living—
What were they did no spirit give them back
Thanksgiving?

III.

Dead air, dead fire, dead shapes and shadows, telling
Time nought;
Man gives them sense and soul by song, and dwelling
In thought.

In human thought their being endures, their power
Abides:
Else were their life a thing that each light hour
Derides.

The years live, work, sigh, smile, and die, with all
They cherish;
The soul endures, though dreams that fed it fall
And perish.

IV.

In human thought have all things habitation
Our days
Laugh, lower, and lighten past, and find no station
That stays.

But thought and faith are mightier things than time
Can wrong,
Made splendid once with speech, or made sublime
By song.

Remembrance, though the tide of change that rolls
Wax hoary,
Gives earth and heaven, for song's sake and the soul's,
Their glory.

July 16th, 1885.

THE RECALL.

RETURN, they cry, ere yet your day
Set, and the sky grow stern:
Return, strayed souls, while yet ye may
Return.

But heavens beyond us yearn;
Yea, heights of heaven above the sway
Of stars that eyes discern.

The soul whose wings from shoreward stray
Makes toward her viewless bourne
Though trustless faith and unfaith say,
Return.

BY TWILIGHT.

IF we dream that desire of the distance above us
Should be fettered by fear of the shadows that seem,
If we wake, to be nought, but to hate or to love us
If we dream.

Night sinks on the soul, and the stars as they gleam
Speak menace or mourning, with tongues to reprove us
That we deemed of them better than terror may deem.

But if hope may not lure us, if fear may not move us,
Thought lightens the darkness wherein the supreme
Pure presence of death shall assure us, and prove us
If we dream.

A BABY'S EPITAPH.

APRIL made me: winter laid me here away asleep.
Bright as Maytime was my daytime; night is soft and deep:
Though the morrow brings forth sorrow, well are ye that weep.

Ye that held me dear beheld me not a twelvemonth long:
All the while ye saw me smile, ye knew not whence the song
Came that made me smile, and laid me here, and wrought you wrong.

Angels, calling from your brawling world one undefiled,
Homeward bade me, and forbade me here to rest beguiled:
Here I sleep not: pass, and weep not here upon your child.

ON THE DEATH OF SIR HENRY TAYLOR.

FOURSCORE and five times has the gradual year
Risen and fulfilled its days of youth and eld
Since first the child's eyes opening first beheld
Light, who now leaves behind to help us here
Light shed from song as starlight from a sphere
Serene as summer; song whose charm compelled
The sovereign soul made flesh in Artevelde
To stand august before us and austere,
Half sad with mortal knowledge, all sublime
With trust that takes no taint from change or time,
Trust in man's might of manhood. Strong and sage,
Clothed round with reverence of remembering hearts,
He, twin-born with our nigh departing age,
Into the light of peace and fame departs.

IN MEMORY OF JOHN WILLIAM INCHBOLD.

FAREWELL: how should not such as thou fare well,
Though we fare ill that love thee, and that live,
And know, whate'er the days wherein we dwell
May give us, thee again they will not give?

Peace, rest, and sleep are all we know of death,
And all we dream of comfort: yet for thee,
Whose breath of life was bright and strenuous breath,
We think the change is other than we see.

The seal of sleep set on thine eyes to-day
Surely can seal not up the keen swift light
That lit them once for ever. Night can slay
None save the children of the womb of night.

The fire that burns up dawn to bring forth noon
Was father of thy spirit: how shouldst thou
Die as they die for whom the sun and moon
Are silent? Thee the darkness holds not now:

Them, while they looked upon the light, and deemed
That life was theirs for living in the sun,
The darkness held in bondage: and they dreamed,
Who knew not that such life as theirs was none.

To thee the sun spake, and the morning sang
Notes deep and clear as life or heaven: the sea

That sounds for them but wild waste music rang
Notes that were lost not when they rang for thee.

The mountains clothed with light and night and change,
The lakes alive with wind and cloud and sun
Made answer, by constraint sublime and strange,
To the ardent hand that bade thy will be done.

We may not bid the mountains mourn, the sea
That lived and lightened from thine hand again
Moan, as of old would men that mourned as we
A man beloved, a man elect of men,

A man that loved them. Vain, divine and vain,
The dream that touched with thoughts or tears of ours
The spirit of sense that lives in sun and rain,
Sings out in birds, and breathes and fades in flowers.

Not for our joy they live, and for our grief
They die not. Though thine eye be closed, thine hand
Powerless as mine to paint them, not a leaf
In English woods or glades of Switzerland

Falls earlier now, fades faster. All our love
Moves not our mother's changeless heart, who gives
A little light to eyes and stars above,
A little life to each man's heart that lives.

A little life to heaven and earth and sea,
To stars and souls revealed of night and day
And change, the one thing changeless: yet shall she
Cease too, perchance, and perish. Who shall say?

Our mother Nature, dark and sweet as sleep,
And strange as life and strong as death, holds fast,
Even as she holds our hearts alive, the deep
Dumb secret of her first-born births and last.

But this, we know, shall cease not till the strife
Of nights and days and fears and hopes find end;
This, through the brief eternities of life,
Endures, and calls from death a living friend;

The love made strong with knowledge, whence confirmed
The whole soul takes assurance, and the past
(So by time's measure, not by memory's, termed)
Lives present life, and mingles first with last.

I, now long since thy guest of many days,
Who found thy hearth a brother's, and with thee
Tracked in and out the lines of rolling bays
And banks and gulfs and reaches of the sea—

Deep dens wherein the wrestling water sobs
And pants with restless pain of refluent breath
Till all the sunless hollow sounds and throbs
With ebb and flow of eddies dark as death—

I know not what more glorious world, what waves
More bright with life,—if brighter aught may live
Than those that filled and fled their tidal caves—
May now give back the love thou hast to give.

Tintagel, and the long Trebarwith sand,
Lone Camelford, and Boscastle divine
With dower of southern blossom, bright and bland
Above the roar of granite-baffled brine,

Shall hear no more by joyous night or day
From downs or causeways good to rove and ride
Or feet of ours or horse-hoofs urge their way
That sped us here and there by tower and tide.

The headlands and the hollows and the waves,
For all our love, forget us: where I am
Thou art not: deeper sleeps the shadow on graves
Than in the sunless gulf that once we swam.

Thou hast swum too soon the sea of death: for us
Too soon, but if truth bless love's blind belief
Faith, born of hope and memory, says not thus:
And joy for thee for me should mean not grief.

And joy for thee, if ever soul of man
Found joy in change and life of ampler birth
Than here pens in the spirit for a span,
Must be the life that doubt calls death on earth.

For if, beyond the shadow and the sleep,
A place there be for souls without a stain,
Where peace is perfect, and delight more deep
Than seas or skies that change and shine again,

There none of all unsullied souls that live
May hold a surer station: none may lend
More light to hope's or memory's lamp, nor give
More joy than thine to those that called thee friend.

Yea, joy from sorrow's barren womb is born
When faith begets on grief the godlike child:
As midnight yearns with starry sense of morn
In Arctic summers, though the sea wax wild,

So love, whose name is memory, thrills at heart,
Remembering and rejoicing in thee, now
Alive where love may dream not what thou art
But knows that higher than hope or love art thou.

'Whatever heaven, if heaven at all may be,
Await the sacred souls of good men dead,
There, now we mourn who loved him here, is he.'
So, sweet and stern of speech, the Roman said,

Erect in grief, in trust erect, and gave
His deathless dead a deathless life even here
Where day bears down on day as wave on wave
And not man's smile fades faster than his tear.

Albeit this gift be given not me to give,
Nor power be mine to break time's silent spell,
Not less shall love that dies not while I live
Bid thee, beloved in life and death, farewell.

NEW YEAR'S DAY.

New Year, be good to England. Bid her name
Shine sunlike as of old on all the sea:
Make strong her soul: set all her spirit free:
Bind fast her homeborn foes with links of shame
More strong than iron and more keen than flame:
Seal up their lips for shame's sake: so shall she
Who was the light that lightened freedom be,
For all false tongues, in all men's eyes the same.

O last-born child of Time, earth's eldest lord,
God undiscrowned of godhead, who for man
Begets all good and evil things that live,
Do thou, his new-begotten son, implored
Of hearts that hope and fear not, make thy span
Bright with such light as history bids thee give.

Jan. 1, 1889.

TO SIR RICHARD F. BURTON.

(ON HIS TRANSLATION OF THE ARABIAN NIGHTS.)

WESTWARD the sun sinks, grave and glad; but far
Eastward, with laughter and tempestuous tears,
Cloud, rain, and splendour as of orient spears,
Keen as the sea's thrill toward a kindling star,
The sundawn breaks the barren twilight's bar
And fires the mist and slays it. Years on years
Vanish, but he that hearkens eastward hears
Bright music from the world where shadows are.

Where shadows are not shadows. Hand in hand
A man's word bids them rise and smile and stand
And triumph. All that glorious orient glows
Defiant of the dusk. Our twilight land
Trembles; but all the heaven is all one rose,
Whence laughing love dissolves her frosts and snows.

NELL GWYN.

SWEET heart, that no taint of the throne or the stage
Could touch with unclean transformation, or alter
To the likeness of courtiers whose consciences falter
At the smile or the frown, at the mirth or the rage,
Of a master whom chance could inflame or assuage,
Our Lady of Laughter, invoked in no psalter,
Adored of no faithful that cringe and that palter,

Praise be with thee yet from a hag-ridden age.

Our Lady of Pity thou wast: and to thee
All England, whose sons are the sons of the sea,
Gives thanks, and will hear not if history snarls
When the name of the friend of her sailors is spoken:
And thy lover she cannot but love—by the token
That thy name was the last on the lips of King Charles.

CALIBAN ON ARIEL.

'*His backward voice is to utter foul speeches and to detract.*'

HE tongue is loosed of that most lying slave,
Whom stripes may move, not kindness. Listen: 'Lo,
The real god of song, Lord Stephano,
That's a brave god, if ever god were brave,
And bears celestial liquor: but,' the knave
(A most ridiculous monster) howls, 'we know
From Ariel's lips what springs of poison flow,
The chicken-heart blasphemer! Hear him rave!'

Thou poisonous slave, got by the devil himself
Upon thy wicked dam, the witch whose name
Is darkness, and the sun her eyes' offence,
Though hell's hot sewerage breed no loathlier elf,
Men cry not shame upon thee, seeing thy shame
So perfect: they but bid thee—'Hag-seed, hence!'

THE WEARY WEDDING.

O DAUGHTER, why do ye laugh and weep,
One with another?
For woe to wake and for will to sleep,
Mother, my mother.

But weep ye winna the day ye wed,
One with another.
For tears are dry when the springs are dead,
Mother, my mother.

Too long have your tears run down like rain,
One with another.
For a long love lost and a sweet love slain,
Mother, my mother.

Too long have your tears dripped down like dew,
One with another.
For a knight that my sire and my brethren slew,
Mother, my mother.

Let past things perish and dead griefs lie,
One with another.
O fain would I weep not, and fain would I die,
Mother, my mother.

Fair gifts we give ye, to laugh and live,
One with another.
But sair and strange are the gifts I give,
Mother, my mother.

And what will ye give for your father's love?
One with another.
Fruits full few and thorns enough,
Mother, my mother.

And what will ye give for your mother's sake?
One with another.
Tears to brew and tares to bake,
Mother, my mother.

And what will ye give your sister Jean?
One with another.
A bier to build and a babe to wean,
Mother, my mother.

And what will ye give your sister Nell?
One with another.
The end of life and beginning of hell,
Mother, my mother.

And what will ye give your sister Kate?
One with another.
Earth's door and hell's gate,
Mother, my mother.

And what will ye give your brother Will?
One with another.
Life's grief and world's ill,
Mother, my mother.

And what will ye give your brother Hugh?
One with another.
A bed of turf to turn into,
Mother, my mother.

And what will ye give your brother John?
One with another.
The dust of death to feed upon,
Mother, my mother.

And what will ye give your bauld bridegroom?
One with another.
A barren bed and an empty room,
Mother, my mother.

And what will ye give your bridegroom's friend?
One with another.
A weary foot to the weary end,
Mother, my mother.

And what will ye give your blithe bridesmaid?
One with another.
Grief to sew and sorrow to braid,
Mother, my mother.

And what will ye drink the day ye're wed?
One with another.
But ae drink of the wan well-head,
Mother, my mother.

And whatten a water is that to draw?
One with another.
We maun draw thereof a', we maun drink thereof a',
Mother, my mother.

And what shall ye pu' where the well rinsdeep?
One with another.
Green herb of death, fine flower of sleep,
Mother, my mother.

Are there ony fishes that swim therein?
One with another.
The white fish grace, and the red fish sin,
Mother, my mother.

Are there ony birds that sing thereby?
One with another.
O when they come thither they sing till they die,
Mother, my mother.

Is there ony draw-bucket to that well-head?
One with another.
There's a wee well-bucket hangs low by a thread,
Mother, my mother.

And whatten a thread is that to spin?
One with another.
It's green for grace, and it's black for sin,
Mother, my mother.

And what will ye strew on your bride-chamber floor?
One with another.
But one strewing and no more,
Mother, my mother.

And whatten a strewing shall that one be?
One with another.
The dust of earth and sand of the sea,
Mother, my mother.

And what will ye take to build your bed?
One with another.
Sighing and shame and the bones of the dead,
Mother, my mother.

And what will ye wear for your wedding gown?
One with another.
Grass for the green and dust for the brown,
Mother, my mother.

And what will ye wear for your wedding lace?
One with another.
A heavy heart and a hidden face,
Mother, my mother.

And what will ye wear for a wreath to your head?
One with another.
Ash for the white and blood for the red,
Mother, my mother.

And what will ye wear for your wedding ring?
One with another.
A weary thought for a weary thing,
Mother, my mother.

And what shall the chimes and the bell-ropes play?
One with another,
A weary tune on a weary day,
Mother, my mother.

And what shall be sung for your wedding song?
One with another.
A weary word of a weary wrong,
Mother, my mother,

The world's way with me runs back,
One with another,
Wedded in white and buried in black,
Mother, my mother.

The world's day and the world's night,
One with another,
Wedded in black and buried in white,
Mother, my mother.

The world's bliss and the world's teen,
One with another,
It's red for white and it's black for green,
Mother, my mother.

The world's will and the world's way,
One with another,
It's sighing for night and crying for day,
Mother, my mother.

The world's good and the world's worth,
One with another,
It's earth to flesh and it's flesh to earth,
Mother, my mother.

* * * * * *

When she came out at the kirkyard gate,
(One with another)
The bridegroom's mother was there in wait
(Mother, my mother.)

O mother, where is my great green bed,
(One with another)
Silk at the foot and gold at the head,
Mother, my mother?

Yea, it is ready, the silk and the gold,
One with another.
But line it well that I lie not cold,
Mother, my mother.

She laid her cheek to the velvet and vair,
One with another;
She laid her arms up under her hair.
(Mother, my mother.)

Her gold hair fell through her arms fu' low,
One with another:
Lord God, bring me out of woe!
(Mother, my mother.)

Her gold hair fell in the gay reeds green,
One with another:
Lord God, bring me out of teen!
(Mother, my mother.)

* * * * * *

O mother, where is my lady gone?
(One with another.)
In the bride-chamber she makes sore moan:
(Mother, my mother.)

Her hair falls over the velvet and vair,
(One with another)
Her great soft tears fall over her hair.
(Mother, my mother.)

When he came into the bride's chamber,
(One with another)
Her hands were like pale yellow amber.
(Mother, my mother.)

Her tears made specks in the velvet and vair,
(One with another)
The seeds of the reeds made specks in her hair.
(Mother, my mother.)

He kissed her under the gold on her head;
(One with another)
The lids of her eyes were like cold lead.
(Mother, my mother.)

He kissed her under the fall of her chin;
(One with another)
There was right little blood therein.
(Mother, my mother.)

He kissed her under her shoulder sweet;
(One with another)
Her throat was weak, with little heat.
(Mother, my mother.)

He kissed her down by her breast-flowers red,
One with another;
They were like river-flowers dead.
(Mother, my mother.)

What ails you now o' your weeping, wife?
(One with another.)
It ails me sair o' my very life.
(Mother, my mother.)

What ails you now o' your weary ways?
(One with another.)
It ails me sair o' my long life-days.
(Mother, my mother.)

Nay, ye are young, ye are over fair.
(One with another.)
Though I be young, what needs ye care?
(Mother, my mother.)

Nay, ye are fair, ye are over sweet.
(One with another.)
Though I be fair, what needs ye greet?
(Mother, my mother.)

Nay, ye are mine while I hold my life.
(One with another.)
O fool, will ye marry the worm for a wife?
(Mother, my mother.)

Nay, ye are mine while I have my breath.
(One with another.)
O fool, will ye marry the dust of death?
(Mother, my mother.)

Yea, ye are mine, we are handfast wed,
One with another.
Nay, I am no man's; nay, I am dead,
Mother, my mother.

THE WINDS.

O WEARY fa' the east wind,
And weary fa' the west:
And gin I were under the wan waves wide
I wot weel wad I rest.

O weary fa' the north wind,
And weary fa' the south:
The sea went ower my good lord's head
Or ever he kissed my mouth.

Weary fa' the windward rocks,
And weary fa' the lee:
They might hae sunken sevenscore ships,
And let my love's gang free.

And weary fa' ye, mariners a',
And weary fa' the sea:
It might hae taken an hundred men,
And let my ae love be.

A LYKE-WAKE SONG.

FAIR of face, full of pride,
Sit ye down by a dead man's side.

Ye sang songs a' the day:
Sit down at night in the red worm's way.

Proud ye were a' day long:
Ye'll be but lean at evensong.

Ye had gowd kells on your hair:
Nae man kens what ye were.

Ye set scorn by the silken stuff:
Now the grave is clean enough.

Ye set scorn by the rubis ring:
Now the worm is a saft sweet thing.

Fine gold and blithe fair face,
Ye are come to a grimly place.

Gold hair and glad grey een,
Nae man kens if ye have been.

A REIVER'S NECK-VERSE.

SOME die singing, and some die swinging,
And weel mot a' they be:
Some die playing, and some die praying,
And I wot sae winna we, my dear,
And I wot sae winna, we.

Some die sailing, and some die wailing,
And some die fair and free:
Some die flyting, and some die fighting,
But I for a fause love's fee, my dear,
But I for a fause love's fee.

Some die laughing, and some die quaffing,
And some die high on tree:
Some die spinning, and some die sinning,
But faggot and fire for ye, my dear,
Faggot and fire for ye.

Some die weeping, and some die sleeping,
And some die under sea:
Some die ganging, and some die hanging,
And a twine of a tow for me, my dear,
A twine of a tow for me.

THE WITCH-MOTHER.

'O WHERE will ye gang to and where will ye sleep,
Against the night begins?'
'My bed is made wi' cauld sorrows,
My sheets are lined wi' sins.

'And a sair grief sitting at my foot,
And a sair grief at my head:
And dule to lay me my laigh pillows,
And teen till I be dead

'And the rain is sair upon my face,
And sair upon my hair;
And the wind upon my weary mouth,
That never may man kiss mair.

'And the snow upon my heavy lips,
That never shall drink nor eat;
And shame to cledding, and woe to wedding,
And pain to drink and meat.

But woe be to my bairns' father,
And ever ill fare he:
He has tane a braw bride hame to him,
Cast out my bairns and me.'

'And what shall they have to their marriage meat
This day they twain are wed?'
'Meat of strong crying, salt of sad sighing,
And God restore the dead.'

'And what shall they have to their wedding wine
This day they twain are wed?'
'Wine of weeping, and draughts of sleeping,
And God raise up the dead.'

She's tane her to the wild woodside,
Between the flood and fell:
She's sought a rede against her need
Of the fiend that bides in hell.

She's tane her to the wan burnside,
She's wrought wi' sang and spell:
She's plighted her soul for doom and dole
To the fiend that bides in hell.

She's set her young son to her breast,
Her auld son to her knee:
Says, 'Weel for you the night, bairnies,
And weel the morn for me.'

She looked fu' lang in their een, sighing,
And sair and sair grat she:
She has slain her young son at her breast,
Her auld son at her knee.

She's sodden their flesh wi' saft water,
She's mixed their blood with wine:
She's tane her to the braw bride-house,
Where a' were boun' to dine.

She poured the red wine in his cup,
And his een grew fain to greet:
She set the baked meats at his hand,
And bade him drink and eat.

Says, 'Eat your fill of your flesh, my lord,
And drink your fill of your wine,
For a' thing's yours and only yours
That has been yours and mine.'

Says, 'Drink your fill of your wine, my lord,
And eat your fill of your bread:
I would they were quick in my body again,
Or I that bare them dead.'

He struck her head frae her fair body,
And dead for grief he fell:
And there were twae mair sangs in heaven
And twae mair sauls in hell.

THE BRIDE'S TRAGEDY.

'THE wind wears roun', the day wears doun,
The moon is grisly grey;
There's nae man rides by the mirk muir-sides,
Nor down the dark Tyne's way.'
In, in, out and in,
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

'And winna ye watch the night wi' me,
And winna ye wake the morn?
Foul shame it were that your ae mither
Should brook her ae son's scorn.'
In, in, out and in,
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

'O mither, I may not sleep nor stray,
My weird is ill to dree;
For a fause faint lord of the south seaboard
Wad win my bride of me.'
In, in, out and in,
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

'The winds are strang, and the nights are lang,
And the ways are sair to ride:
And I maun gang to wreak my wrang,
And ye maun bide and bide.'
In, in, out and in,
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

'Gin I maun bide and bide, Willie,
I wot my weird is sair:
Weel may ye get ye a light love yet,
But never a mither mair.'
In, in, out and in,
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

'O gin the morrow be great wi' sorrow,
The wyte be yours of a':
But though ye slay me that haud and stay me,
The weird ye will maun fa'.'
In, in, out and in,
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

When cocks were crawing and day was dawing,
He's boun' him forth to ride:
And the ae first may he's met that day
Was fause Earl Robert's bride.
In, in, out and in.
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

O blithe and braw were the bride-folk a',
But sad and saft rade she;
And sad as doom was her fause bridegroom,
But fair and fain was he.
In, in, out and in,
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

'And winna ye bide, sae saft ye ride,
And winna ye speak wi' me?
For mony's the word and the kindly word
I have spoken aft wi' thee.'
In, in, out and in,
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

'My lamp was lit yestreen, Willie,
My window-gate was wide:
But ye camena nigh me till day came by me
And made me not your bride.'
In, in, out and in,
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

He's set his hand to her bridle-rein,
He's turned her horse away:
And the cry was sair, and the wrath was mair,
And fast and fain rode they.
In, in, out and in,
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

But when they came by Chollerford,
I wot the ways were fell;
For broad and brown the spate swang down,
And the lift was mirk as hell.
In, in, out and in,
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

'And will ye ride yon fell water,
Or will ye bide for fear?
Nae scathe ye'll win o' your father's kin,
Though they should slay me here.'
In, in, out and in,
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

'I had liefer ride yon fell water,
Though stange it be to ride,
Than I wad stand on the fair green strand
And thou be slain beside.'
In, in, out and in,
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

'I had liefer swim yon wild water,
Though sair it be to bide,
Than I wad stand at a strange man's hand
To be a strange man's bride.'
In, in, out and in,
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

'I had liefer drink yon dark water,
Wi' the stanes to make my bed,
And the faem to hide me, and thou beside me,
Than I wad see thee dead.'
In, in, out and in,
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

He's kissed her twice, he's kissed her thrice,
On cheek and lip and chin:
He's wound her rein to his hand again,
And lightly they leapt in.
In, in, out and in,
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

Their hearts were high to live or die,
Their steeds were stark of limb:
But the stream was starker, the spate was darker,
Than man might live and swim.
In, in, out and in,
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

The first ae step they strode therein,
It smote them foot and knee:
But ere they wan to the mid water
The spate was as the sea.
In, in, out and in,
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

But when they wan to the mid water,
It smote them hand and head:
And nae man knows but the wave that flows
Where they lie drowned and dead.
In, in, out and in,
Blaws the wind and whirls the whin.

A JACOBITE'S FAREWELL.

1716.

THERE'S nae mair lands to tyne, my dear,
And nae mair lives to gie:
Though a man think sair to live nae mair,
There's but one day to die

For a' things come and a' days gane,
What needs ye rend your hair?
But kiss me till the morn's morrow,
Then I'll kiss ye nae mair.

O lands are lost and life's losing,
And what were they to gie?
Fu' mony a man gives all he can,
But nae man else gives ye.

Our king wons ower the sea's water,
And I in prison sair:
But I'll win out the morn's morrow,
And ye'll see me nae mair.

A JACOBITE'S EXILE.

1746.

THE weary day rins down and dies,
The weary night wears through:
And never an hour is fair wi' flower,
And never a flower wi' dew.

I would the day were night for me,
I would the night were day:
For then would I stand in my ain fair land,
As now in dreams I may.

O lordly flow the Loire and Seine,
And loud the dark Durance:
But bonnier shine the braes of Tyne
Than a' the fields of France;
And the waves of Till that speak sae still
Gleam goodlier where they glance.

O weel were they that fell fighting
On dark Drumossie's day:
They keep their hame ayont the faem,
And we die far away.

O sound they sleep, and saft, and deep,
But night and day wake we;
And ever between the sea-banks green
Sounds loud the sundering sea.

And ill we sleep, sae sair we weep,
But sweet and fast sleep they;
And the mool that haps them roun' and laps them
Is e'en their country's clay;
But the land we tread that are not dead
Is strange as night by day.

Strange as night in a strange man's sight,
Though fair as dawn it be:
For what is here that a stranger's cheer
Should yet wax blithe to see?

The hills stand steep, the dells lie deep,
The fields are green and gold:
The hill-streams sing, and the hill-sides ring,
As ours at home of old.

But hills and flowers are nane of ours,
And ours are oversea:
And the kind strange land whereon we stand,
It wotsna what were we
Or ever we came, wi' scathe and shame,
To try what end might be.

Scathe, and shame, and a waefu' name,
And a weary time and strange,
Have they that seeing a weird for dreeing
Can die, and cannot change.

Shame and scorn may we thole that mourn,
Though sair be they to dree:
But ill may we bide the thoughts we hide,
Mair keen than wind and sea.

Ill may we thole the night's watches,
And ill the weary day:
And the dreams that keep the gates of sleep,
A waefu' gift gie they;
For the sangs they sing us, the sights they bring us,
The morn blaws all away.

On Aikenshaw the sun blinks braw,
The burn rins blithe and fain:
There's nought wi' me I wadna gie
To look thereon again.

On Keilder-side the wind blaws wide;
There sounds nae hunting-horn
That rings sae sweet as the winds that beat
Round banks where Tyne is born.

The Wansbeck sings with all her springs,
The bents and braes give ear;
But the wood that rings wi' the sang she sings
I may not see nor hear;
For far and far thae blithe burns are,
And strange is a' thing near.

The light there lightens, the day there brightens,
The loud wind there lives free:
Nae light comes nigh me or wind blaws by me
That I wad hear or see.

But O gin I were there again,
Afar ayont the faem,
Cauld and dead in the sweet saft bed
That haps my sires at hame!

We'll see nae mair the sea-banks fair,
And the sweet grey gleaming sky,
And the lordly strand of Northumberland,
And the goodly towers thereby:
And none shall know but the winds that blow
The graves wherein we lie.

THE TYNESIDE WIDOW.

THERE'S mony a man loves land and life,
Loves life and land and fee;
And mony a man loves fair women,
But never a man loves me, my love,
But never a man loves me.

O weel and weel for a' lovers,
I wot weel may they be;
And weel and weel for a' fair maidens,
But aye mair woe for me, my love,
But aye mair woe for me.

O weel be wi' you, ye sma' flowers,
Ye flowers and every tree;
And weel be wi' you, a' birdies,
But teen and tears wi' me, my love,
But teen and tears wi' me.

O weel be yours, my three brethren,
And ever weel be ye;
Wi' deeds for doing and loves for wooing,
But never a love for me, my love,
But never a love for me.

And weel be yours, my seven sisters,
And good love-days to see,
And long life-days and true lovers,
But never a day for me, my love,
But never a day for me.

Good times wi' you, ye bauld riders,
By the hieland and the lee;
And by the leeland and by the hieland
It's weary times wi' me, my love,
It's weary times wi' me.

Good days wi' you, ye good sailors,
Sail in and out the sea;
And by the beaches and by the reaches
It's heavy days wi' me, my love,
It's heavy days wi' me.

I had his kiss upon my mouth,
His bairn upon my knee;
I would my soul and body were twain,
And the bairn and the kiss wi' me, my love,
And the bairn and the kiss wi' me.

The bairn down in the mools, my dear,
O saft and saft lies she;
I would the mools were ower my head,
And the young bairn fast wi' me, my love,
And the young bairn fast wi' me.

The father under the faem, my dear,
O sound and sound sleeps he;
I would the faem were ower my face,
And the father lay by me, my love,
And the father lay by me.

I would the faem were ower my face,
  Or the mools on my ee-bree;
And waking, time with a' lovers,
  But sleeping-time wi' me, my love,
  But sleeping-time wi' me.

I would the mools were meat in my mouth,
  The saut faem in my ee;
And the land-worm and the water-worm
  To feed fu' sweet on me, my love,
  To feed fu' sweet on me.

My life is sealed with a seal of love,
  And locked with love for a key;
And I lie wrang and I wake lang,
  But ye tak' nae thought for me, my love,
  But ye tak' nae thought for me.

We were weel fain of love, my dear,
  O fain and fain were we;
It was weel with a' the weary world,
  But O, sae weel wi' me, my love,
  But O, sae weel wi' me.

We were nane ower mony to sleep, my dear,
  I wot we were but three;
And never a bed in the weary world
  For my bairn and my dear and me, my love,
  For my bairn and my dear and me.

DEDICATION.

THE years are many, the changes more,
Since wind and sun on the wild sweet shore
  Where Joyous Gard stands stark by the sea
With face as bright as in years of yore

Shone, swept, and sounded, and laughed for glee
More deep than a man's or a child's may be,
  On a day when summer was wild and glad,
And the guests of the wind and the sun were we.

The light that lightens from seasons clad
With darkness now, is it glad or sad?
  Not sad but glad should it shine, meseems,
On eyes yet fain of the joys they had.

For joy was there with us; joy that gleams
And murmurs yet in the world of dreams
  Where thought holds fast, as a constant warder,
The days when I rode by moors and streams,

Reining my rhymes into buoyant order
Through honied leagues of the northland border.
  Though thought or memory fade, and prove
A faithless keeper, a thriftless hoarder,

One landmark never can change remove,
One sign can the years efface not. Love,
  More strong than death or than doubt may be,
Treads down their strengths, and abides above.

Yea, change and death are his servants: we,
Whom love of the dead links fast, though free.
  May smile as they that beheld the dove
Bear home her signal across the sea.

SONGS OF THE SPRINGTIDES.

DEDICATION.

TO EDWARD JOHN TRELAWNY.

A sea-mew on a sea-king's wrist alighting,
As the north sea-wind caught and strained and curled
The raven-figured flag that led men fighting
From field to green field of the water-world,
Might find such brief high favour at his hand
For wings imbrued with brine, with foam impearled,
As these my songs require at yours on land,
That durst not save for love's free sake require,
Being lightly born between the foam and sand,
But reared by hope and memory and desire
Of lives that were and life that is to be,
Even such as filled his heavenlier song with fire
Whose very voice, that sang to set man free,
Was in your ears as ever in ours his lyre,
Once, ere the flame received him from the sea.

THALASSIUS

Upon the flowery forefront of the year,
One wandering by the grey-green April sea
Found on a reach of shingle and shallower sand
Inlaid with starrier glimmering jewellery
Left for the sun's love and the light wind's cheer
Along the foam-flowered strand
Breeze-brightened, something nearer sea than land
Though the last shoreward blossom-fringe was near,
A babe asleep with flower-soft face that gleamed
To sun and seaward as it laughed and dreamed,
Too sure of either love for either's fear,
Albeit so birdlike slight and light, it seemed
Nor man nor mortal child of man, but fair
As even its twin-born tenderer spray-flowers were,
That the wind scattered like an Oread's hair.

For when July strewed fire on earth and sea
The last time ere that year,
Out of the flame of morn Cymothoe
Beheld one brighter than the sun bright sphere
Move toward her from its fieriest heart, whence trod
The live sun's very God,
Across the foam-bright water-ways that are
As heavenlier heavens with star for answering star,
And on her eyes and hair and maiden mouth
Felt a kiss falling fierier than the South
And heard above afar
A noise of songs and wind enamoured wings
And lutes and lyres of milder and mightier strings,
And round the resonant radiance of his car
Where depth is one with height,
Light heard as music, music seen as light
And with that second moondawn of the spring's
That fosters the first rose,
A sun-child whiter than the sunlit snows
Was born out of the world of sunless things
That round the round earth flows and ebbs and flows.

But he that found the sea-flower by the sea
And took to foster like a graft of earth
Was born of man's most highest and heavenliest birth,
Free-born as winds and stars and waves are free;
A warrior grey with glories more than years,
Though more of years than change the quick to dead
Had rained their light and darkness on his head
A singer that in time's and memory's ears
Should leave such words to sing as all his peers
Might praise with hallowing heat of rapturous tears
Till all the days of human flight were fled.
And at his knees his fosterling was fed
Not with man's wine and bread
Nor mortal mother-milk of hopes and fears,
But food of deep memorial days long sped;
For bread with wisdom and with song for wine
Clear as the full calms emerald hyaline.
And from his grave glad lips the boy would gather
Fine honey of song-notes goldener than gold,
More sweet than bees make of the breathing heather,
That he, as glad and bold,
Might drink as they, and keep his spirit from cold.
And the boy loved his laurel-laden hair
As his own father's risen on the eastern air,
And that less white brow-binding bayleaf bloom
More than all flowers his father's eyes relume;
And those high songs he heard,
More than all notes of any landward bird,
More than all sounds less free
Than the wind's quiring to the choral sea.

High things the high song taught him ; how the breath
Too frail for life may be more strong than death ;
And this poor flash of sense in life, that gleams
As a ghost's glory in dreams,
More stabile than the world's own heart's root seems,
By that strong faith of lordliest love which gives
To death's own sightless-seeming eyes a light
Clearer, to death's bare bones a verier might.
Than shines or strikes from any man that lives.
How he that loves life overmuch shall die
The dog's death, utterly :
And he that much less loves it than he hates
All wrongdoing that is done
Anywhere always underneath the sun
Shall live a mightier life than time's or fate's.
One fairer thing he shewed him, and in might
More strong than day and night
Whose strengths build up time's towering period :
Yea, one thing stronger and more high than God,
Which if man had not, then should God not be:
And that was Liberty.
And gladly should man die to gain, he said,
Freedom ; and gladlier, having lost, lie dead.
For man's earth was not, nor the sweet sea-waves
His, nor his own land, nor its very graves,
Except they bred not, bore not, hid not slaves:
But all of all that is,
Were one man free in body and soul, were his.
And the song softened, even as heaven by night
Softens, from sunnier down to starrier light,
And with its moonbright breath
Blessed life for death's sake, and for life's sake death.
Till as the moon's own beam and breath confuse
In one clear hueless haze of glimmering hues
The sea's line and the land's line and the sky's,
And light for love of darkness almost dies,
As darkness only lives for light's dear love,
Whose hands the web of night is woven of :
So in that heaven of wondrous words were life
And death brought out of strife ;
Yea, by that strong spell of serene increase
Brought out of strife to peace.

And the song lightened, as the wind at morn
Flashes, and even with lightning of the wind
Night's thick-spun web is thinned
And all its weft unwoven and overworn
Shrinks, as might love from scorn.
And as when wind and light on water and land
Leap as twin gods from heavenward hand in hand,
And with the sound and splendor of their leap
Strike darkness dead, and daunt the spirit of sleep,
And burn it up with fire ;
So with the light that lightened from the lyre
Was all the bright heat in the child's heart stirred
And blown with blasts of music into flame
Till even his sense became
Fire, as the sense that fires the singing bird
Whose song calls night by name.
And in the soul within the sense began
The manlike passion of a godlike man,
And in the sense within the soul again
Thoughts that make men of gods and gods of men.

For love the high song taught him : love that turns
God's heart toward man as man's to Godward ; love
That life and death and life are fashioned of,
From the first breath that burns
Half kindled on the flowerlike yeanling's lip,
So light and faint that life seems like to slip,
To that yet weaklier drawn
When sunset dies of night's devouring dawn
But the man dying not wholly as all men dies
If aught be left of his in live men's eyes
Out of the dawnless dark of death to rise ;
If aught of deed or word
Be seen for all time or of all time heard.
Love, that though body and soul were overthrown
Should live for love's sake of itself alone,
Though spirit and flesh were one thing doomed and dead,
Not wholly annihilated.
Seeing even the hoariest ash-flake that the pyre
Drops, and forgets the thing was once afire
And gave its heart to feed the pile's full flame
Till its own heart its own heat overcame,
Outlives its own life, though by scarce a span
As such men dying outlive themselves in man
Outlive themselves for ever ; if the heat
Outburn the heart that kindled it, the sweet
Outlast the flower whose soul it was, and flit

Forth of the body of it
Into some new shape of a strange perfume
More potent than its light live spirit of bloom,
How shall not something of that soul relive,
That only soul that had such gifts to give
As lighten something even of all men's doom
Even from the laboring womb
Even to the seal set on the unopening tomb?
And these the loving light of song and love
Shall wrap and lap round and impend above,
Imperishable ; and all springs born illume
Their sleep with brighter thoughts than wake the dove
To music, when the hillside winds resume
The marriage-song of heather-flower and broom
And all the joy thereof.

And hate the song too taught him : hate of all
That brings or holds in thrall
Of spirit or flesh, free-born ere God began,
The holy body and sacred soul of man.
And wheresoever a curse was or a chain,
A throne for torment or a crown for bane
Rose, moulded out of poor men's molten pain,
There, said he, should man's heaviest hate be set
Inexorably, to faint not or forget
Till the last warmth bled forth of the last vein
In flesh that none should call a king's again,
Seeing wolves and dogs and birds that plague-strike air
Leave the last bone of all the carrion bare.

And hope the high song taught him : hope whose eyes
Can sound the seas unsoundable, the skies
Inaccessible eyesight ; that can see
What earth beholds not, hear what wind and sea
Hear not, and speak what all these crying in one
Can speak not to the sun.
For in her sovereign eyelight all things are
Clear as the closest seen and kindlier star
That marries morn and even and winter and spring
With one loves golden ring.
For she can see the days of man, the birth
Of good and death of evil things on earth
Inevitable and infinite, and sure
As present pain is, or herself is pure.
Yea, she can hear and see, beyond all things
That lighten from before Time's thunderous wings
Through the awful circle of wheel-winged periods,
The tempest of the twilight of all Gods :
And higher than all the circling course they ran
The sundawn of the spirit that was man.

And fear the song too taught him ; fear to be
Worthless the dear love of the wind and sea
That bred him fearless, like a sea-mew reared
In rocks of man's foot feared,
Where nought of wingless life may sing or shine.
Fear to wax worthless of that heaven he had
When all the life in all his limbs was glad
And all the drops in all his veins were wine
And all the pulses music ; when his heart,
Singing, bade heaven and wind and sea bear part
In one live song's reiterance, and they bore :
Fear to go crownless of the flower he wore
When the winds loved him and the waters knew,
The blithest life that clove their blithe life through
With living limbs exultant, or held strife
More amorous than all dalliance aye anew
With the bright breath and strength of their large life,
With all strong wrath of all sheer winds that blew,
All glories of all storms of the air that fell
Prone, ineluctable,
With roar from heaven of revel, and with hue
As of heaven turned hell.
For when the red blast of their breath had made
All heaven aflush with light more dire than shade,
He felt it in his blood and eyes and hair
Burn as if all the fires of the earth and air
Had laid strong hold upon his flesh, and stung
The soul behind it as with serpent's tongue,
Forked like the loveliest lightnings : nor could bear
But hardly, half distraught with strong delight,
The joy that like a garment wrapped him round
And lapped him over and under
With raiment of great light
And rapture of great sound
At every loud leap earthward of the thunder
From heaven's most furthest bound :
So seemed all heaven in hearing and in sight

Alive and mad with glory and angry joy,
That something of its marvellous mirth and might
Moved even to madness, fledged as even for flight,
The blood and spirit of one but mortal boy.

So, clothed with love and fear that love makes great,
And armed with hope and hate,
He set first foot upon the spring-flowered ways
That all feet pass and praise.
And one dim dawn between the winter and spring,
In the sharp harsh wind harrying heaven and earth
To put back April that had borne his birth
From sunward on her sunniest shower-struck wing,
With tears and laughter for the dew-dropt thing,
Slight as indeed a dew-drop, by the sea
One met him lovelier than all men may be,
God-featured, with God's eyes; and in their might
Somewhat that drew men's own to mar their sight,
Even of all eyes drawn toward him: and his mouth
Was as the very rose of all men's youth,
One rose of all the rose-beds in the world:
But round his brows the curls were snakes that curled,
And like his tongue a serpent's; and his voice
Speaks death, and bids rejoice.
Yet then he spake no word, seeming as dumb,
A dumb thing mild and hurtless; nor at first
From his bowed eyes seemed any light to come,
Nor his meek lips for blood or tears to thirst:
But as one blind and mute in mild sweet wise
Pleading for pity of piteous lips and eyes,
He strayed with faint bare lily-lovely feet
Helpless, and flowerlike sweet:
Nor might man see, not having word hereof,
That this of all gods was the great god Love.

And seeing him lovely and like a little child
That wellnigh wept for wonder that it smiled
And was so feeble and fearful, with soft speech
The youth bespake him softly; but there fell
From the sweet lips no sweet word audible
That ear or thought might reach:
No sound to make the dim cold silence glad,
No breath to thaw the hard harsh air with heat;
Only the saddest smile of all things sweet,
Only the sweetest smile of all things sad.

And so they went together one green way
Till April dying made free the world for May;
And on his guide suddenly Love's face turned,
And in his blind eyes burned
Hard light and heat of laughter; and like flame
That opens in a mountain's ravening mouth
To blear and sear the sunlight from the south,
His mute mouth opened, and his first word came:
'Knowest thou me now by name?'
And all his stature waxed immeasurable,
As of one shadowing heaven and lightening hell;
And statelier stood he than a tower that stands
And darkens with its darkness far-off sands
Whereon the sky leans red;
And with a voice that stilled the winds he said:
'I am he that was thy lord before thy birth,
I am he that is thy lord till thou turn earth:
I make the night more dark, and all the morrow
Dark as the night whose darkness was my breath:
O fool, my name is sorrow;
Thou fool, my name is death.'

And he that heard spake not, and looked right on
Again, and Love was gone.
Through many a night toward many a wearier day
His spirit bore his body down its way.
Through many a day toward many a wearier night
His soul sustained his sorrows in her sight.
And earth was bitterer, and heaven, and even the sea
Sorrowful even as he.
And the wind helped not, and the sun was dumb;
And with too long stress of grief to be
His heart grew sere and numb.

And one bright eve ere summer in autumn sank
At stardawn standing on a grey sea-bank
He felt the wind fitfully shift and heave
As toward a stormier eve;
And all the wan wide sea shuddered; and earth

Shook underfoot as toward some timeless birth,
Intolerable and inevitable ; and all
Heaven, darkling, trembled like a stricken thrall.
And far out of the quivering east, and far
From past the moonrise and its guiding star,
Began a noise of tempest and a light
That was not of the lightning ; and a sound
Rang with it round and round
That was not of the thunder; and a flight
As of blown clouds by night,
That was not of them ; and with songs and cries
That sang and shrieked their soul out at the skies
A shapeless earthly storm of shapes began
From all ways round to move in on the man,
Clamorous against him silent ; and their feet
Were as the wind's are fleet,
And their shrill songs were as wild birds' are sweet.

And as when all the world of earth was wronged
And all the host of all men driven afoam
By the red hand of Rome,
Round some fierce amphitheatre overthronged
With fair clear faces full of bloodier lust
Than swells and stings the tiger when his mood
Is fieriest after blood
And drunk with trampling of the murderous must
That soaks and stains the tortuous close-coiled wood
Made monstrous with its myriad-mustering brood,
Face by fair face panted and gleamed and pressed,
And breast by passionate breast
Heaved hot with ravenous rapture, as they quaffed
The red ripe full fume of the deep live draught,
The sharp quick reek of keen fresh bloodshed, blown
Through the dense deep drift up to the emperor's throne
From the under steaming sands
With clamour of all-applausive throats and hands,
Mingling in mirthful time
With shrill blithe mockeries of the lithe-limbed mime :
So from somewhence far forth of the unbeholden,
Dreadfully driven from over and after and under,
Fierce, blown through fifes of brazen blast and golden,
With sound of chiming waves that drown the thunder
Or thunder that strikes dumb the sea's own chimes,
Began the bellowing of the bull-voiced mimes,
Terrible ; firs bowed down as briars or palms
Even as the breathless blast as of a breeze
Fulfilled with clamor and clangor and storms of psalms ;
Red hands rent up the roots of oldworld trees,
Thick flames of torches tossed as tumbling seas
Made mad the moonless and infuriate air
That, ravening, revelled in the riotous hair
And raiment of the furred Bassarides.

So came all those in on him ; and his heart,
As out of sleep suddenly struck astart,
Danced, and his flesh took fire of theirs, and grief
Was as a last year's leaf
Blown dead far down the wind's way ; and he set
His pale mouth to the brightest mouth it met
That laughed for love against his lips, and bade
Follow ; and in following all his blood grew glad
And as again a sea-bird's ; for the wind
Took him to bathe him deep round breast and brow
Not as it takes a dead leaf drained and thinned,
But as the brightest bay-flower blown on bough,
Set springing toward it singing : and they rode
By many a vine-leafed, many a rose-hung road,
Exalt with exultation ; many a night
Set all its stars upon them as for spies
On many a moon-bewildering mountain-height
Where he rode only by the fierier light
Of his dread lady's hot sweet hungering eyes.
For the moon wandered witless of her way,
Spell-stricken by strong magic in such wise
As wizards use to set the stars astray.
And in his ears the music that makes mad
Beat always ; and what way the music bade,
That always rode he ; nor was any sleep
His, nor from height nor deep.
But heaven was as red iron, slumberless,
And had no heart to bless ;
And earth lay sere and darkling as distraught,

And help in her was nought.

Then many a midnight, many a morn and even,
His mother, passing forth of her fair heaven,
With goodlier gifts than all save gods can give
From earth or from the heaven where sea-things live,
With shine of sea-flowers through the bay-leaf braid
Woven for a crown her foam-white hands had made
To crown him with land's laurel and sea-dew,
Sought the sea-bird that was her boy : but he
Sat panther-throned beside Erigone,
Riding the red ways of the revel through
Midmost of pale-mouthed passion's crownless crew.
Till on some winter's dawn of some dim year
He let the vine-bit on the panther's lip
Slide, and the green rein slip,
And set his eyes to seaward, nor gave ear
If sound from landward hailed him, dire or dear ;
And passing forth of all those fair fierce ranks
Back to the grey sea-banks,
Against a sea-rock lying, aslant the steep,
Fell after many sleepless dreams on sleep.

And in his sleep the dun green light was shed
Heavily round his head
That through the veil of sea falls fathom-deep,
Blurred like a lamp's that when the night drops dead
Dies ; and his eyes gat grace of sleep to see
The deep divine dark dayshine of the sea,
Dense water-walls and clear dusk water-ways,
Broad-based, or branching as a sea-flower sprays
That side or this dividing ; and anew
The glory of all her glories that he knew.
And in sharp rapture of recovering tears
He woke on fire with yearnings of old years,
Pure as one purged of pain that passion bore,
Ill child of bitter mother ; for his own
Looked laughing toward him from her midsea throne,
Up toward him there ashore.

Thence in his heart the great same joy began,
Of child that made him man :
And turned again from all hearts else on quest,
He communed with his own heart, and had rest.
And like sea-winds upon loud waters ran
His days and dreams together, till the joy
Burned in him of the boy.
Till the earth's great comfort and the sweet sea's breath
Breathed and blew life in where was heartless death,
Death spirit-stricken of soul-sick days, where strife
Of thought and flesh made mock of death and life.
And grace returned upon him of his birth
Where heaven was mixed with heavenlike sea and earth ;
And song shot forth strong wings that took the sun
From inward, fledged with might of sorrow and mirth
And father's fire made mortal in his son.
Nor was not spirit of strength in blast and breeze
To exalt again the sun's child and the sea's :
For as wild mares in Thessaly grow great
With child of ravishing winds, that violate
Their leaping length of limb with manes like fire
And eyes outburning heaven's
With fires more violent than the lightning levin's
And breath drained out and desperate of desire
Even so the spirit in him, when winds grew strong,
Grew great with child of song.
Nor less than when his veins first leapt for joy
To draw delight in such as burns a boy,
Now too the soul of all his senses felt
The passionate pride of deep sea-pulses dealt
Through nerve and jubilant vein
As from the love and largess of old time,
And with his heart again
The tidal throb of all the tides keep rhyme
And charm him from his own soul's separate sense
With infinite and invasive influence
That made strength sweet in him and sweetness strong,
Being now no more a singer, but a song.

Till one clear day when brighter sea-wind blew
And louder sea-shine lightened, for the waves
Were full of godhead and the light that saves,
His father's, and their spirit had pierced him through,
He felt strange breath and light all round him shed

That bowed him down with rapture; and he knew
His father's hand, hallowing his humbled head,
And the old great voice of the old good time, that said:

'Child of my sunlight and the sea, from birth
A fosterling and fugitive on earth;
Sleepless of soul as wind or wave or fire,
A manchild with an ungrown God's desire;
Because thou hast loved nought mortal more than me,
Thy father, and thy mother-hearted sea;
Because thou hast set thine heart to sing, and sold
Life and life's love for song, God's living gold;
Because thou hast given thy flower and fire of youth
To feed men's hearts with visions, truer than truth;
Because thou hast kept in those world-wandering eyes
The light that makes me music of the skies;
Because thou hast heard with world-unwearied ears
The music that puts light into the spheres;
Have therefore in thine heart and in thy mouth
The sound of song that mingles north and south,
The song of all the winds that sing of me,
And in thy soul the sense of all the sea.'

ON THE CLIFFS

ἱμερόφωνος ἀηδών.

SAPPHO.

BETWEEN the moondawn and the sundown here
The twilight hangs half starless; half the sea
Still quivers as for love or pain or fear
Or pleasure mightier than these all may be
A man's live heart might beat
Wherein a God's with mortal blood should meet
And fill its pulse too full to bear the strain
With fear or love or pleasure's twin-born, pain.
Fiercely the gaunt woods to the grim soil cling
That bears for all fair fruits
Wan wild sparse flowers of windy and wintry spring
Between the tortive serpent-shapen roots
Wherethrough their dim growth hardly strikes and shoots
And shews one gracious thing
Hardly, to speak for summer one sweet word
Of summer's self scarce heard.
But higher the steep green sterile fields, thick-set
With flowerless hawthorn even to the upward verge
Whence the woods gathering watch new cliffs emerge
Higher than their highest of crowns that sea winds fret,
Hold fast, for all that night or wind can say,
Some pale pure colour yet,
Too dim for green and luminous for grey.
Between the climbing inland cliffs above
And these beneath that breast and break the bay,
A barren peace to soft for hate or love
Broods on an hour to dim for night or day.
O wind, O wingless wind that walk'st the sea,
Weak wind, wing-broken, wearier wind than we,
Who are yet not spirit-broken, maimed like thee
Who wail not in our inward night as thou
In the outer darkness now,
What word has the old sea given thee for mine ear

From thy faint lips to hear?
For some word would she send me, knowing not how.

Nay, what far other word
Than ever of her was spoken, or of me
Or all my winged white kinsfolk of the sea
Between fresh wave and wave was ever heard,
Cleaves the clear dark enwinding tree with tree
Too close for stars to separate and to see
Enmeshed in multitudinous unity?
What voice of what strong God hath stormed and stirred
The fortressed rock of silence, rent apart
Even to the core Night's all maternal heart?
What voice of God grown heavenlier in a bird,
Make keener of edge to smite
Than lightning,—yea, thou knowest, O mother Night,
Keen as that cry from thy strange children sent
Wherewith the Athenian judgment-shrine was rent,
For wrath that all their wrath was vainly spent,
Their wrath for wrong made right
By justice in her own divine despite
That bade pass forth unblamed
The sinless matricide and unashamed?
Yea, what new cry is this, what note more bright
Than their song's wing of words was dark of flight,
What word is this thou hast heard,
Thine and not thine or theirs, O Night, what word
More keen than lightning and more sweet than light?
As all men's hearts grew godlike in one bird
And all those hearts cried on thee, crying with might,
Hear us, O mother Night!

Dumb is the mouth of darkness as of death:
Light, sound and life are one
In the eyes and lips of dawn that draw the sun
To hear what first child's word with glimmering breath
Their weak wan weanling child the twilight saith;
But night makes answer none.

God, if thou be god.—bird, if bird thou be,—
Do thou then answer me.
For but one word, what wind soever blow,
Is blown up usward ever from the sea.
In fruitless years of youth dead long ago
And deep beneath their own dead leaves and snow
Buried, I heard with bitter heart and sere
The same sea's word unchangeable, nor knew
But that mine own life-days were changeless too
And sharp and salt with unshed tear on tear
And cold and fierce and barren; and my soul,
Sickening, swam weakly with bated breath
In a deep sea like death,
And felt the wind buffet her face with brine
Hard, and harsh thought on thought in long bleak roll
Blown by keen gusts of memory sad as thine
Heap the weight up of pain, and break, and leave
Strength scarce enough to grieve
In the sick heavy spirit, unmanned with strife
Of waves that beat at the tired lips of life.

Nay, sad may be man's memory, sad may be
The dream he weaves him as for shadow of thee,
But scarce one breathing-space, one heartbeat long,
Wilt thou take shadow of sadness on thy song.
Not thou, being more than man or man's desire,
Being bird and God in one,
With throat of gold and spirit of the sun;
The sun whom all our souls and songs call sire,
Whose godhead gave thee, chosen of all our quire,
Thee only of all that serve, of all that sing
Before our sire and king,
Borne up some space on time's world-wandering wing,
This gift, this doom, to bear till time's wing tire—
Life everlasting of eternal fire.

Thee only of all; yet can no memory say
How many a night and day
My heart has been as thy heart, and my life
As thy life is, a sleepless hidden thing,
Full of the thirst and hunger of winter and spring,
That seeks its food not in such love or strife
As fill men's hearts with passionate hours and rest.
From no loved lips and on no loving breast
Have I sought ever for such gifts as bring
Comfort, to stay the secret soul with sleep,

The joys, the loves, the labors, whence men reap
Rathe fruit of hopes and fears,
I have made not mine; the best of all my days
Have been as those fair fruitless summer strays,
Those water-waifs that but the sea-wind steers,
Flakes of glad foam or flowers on footless ways
That take the wind in season and the sun,
And when the wind wills is their season done.

For all my days as all thy days from birth
My heart as thy heart was in me as thee,
Fire; and not all the fountains of the sea
Have waves enough to quench it, nor on earth
Is fuel enough to feed,
While day sows night and night sows day for seed.

We were not marked for sorrow, thou nor I,
For joy nor sorrow, sister, were we made,
To take delight and grief to live and die,
Assuaged by pleasures or by pains affrayed
That melt men's hearts and alter; we retain
A memory mastering pleasure and all pain,
A spirit within the sense of ear and eye,
A soul behind the soul, that seeks and sings
And makes our life move only with its wings
And feed but from its lips, that in return
Feed of our hearts wherein the old fires that burn
Have strength not to consume
Nor glory enough to exalt us past our doom.

Ah, ah, the doom (thou knowest whence rang that wail)
Of the shrill nightingale!
(From whose wild lips, thou knowest, that wail was thrown)
For round about her have the great gods cast
A wing-borne body, and clothed her close and fast
With a sweet life that hath no part in moan.
But me, for me (how hadst thou heart to hear?)
Remains a sundering with the two-edged spear.

Ah, for her doom! so cried in presage then
The bodeful bondslave of the king of men,
And might not win her will.
Too close the entangling dragnet woven of crime,
The snare of ill new-born of elder ill,
The curse of new time for an elder time,
Had caught, and held her yet,
Enmeshed intolerably in the intolerant net,
Who thought with craft to mock the God most high,
And win by wiles his crown of prophecy
From the Sun's hand sublime,
As God were man, to spare or to forget,

But thou,—the gods have given thee and forgiven thee
More than our master gave
That strange-eyed spirit-wounded strange-tongued slave
There questing houndlike where the roofs red-wet
Reeked as a wet red grave.
Life everlasting has their strange grace given thee,
Even hers whom thou wast wont to sing and serve
With eyes, but not with song, too swift to swerve;
Yet might not even thine eyes estranged estrange her,
Who seeing thee too, but inly, burn and bleed
Like that pale princess-priest of Priam's seed,
For stranger service gave thee guerdon, stranger
If this indeed be guerdon, this indeed
Her mercy, this thy meed—
That thou, being more than all we born, being higher
Than all heads crowned of him that only gives
The light whereby man lives,
The bay that bids man moved of God's desire
Lay hand on lute or lyre,
Set lip to trumpet or deflowered green reed—
If this were given thee for a grace indeed,
That thou, being first of all these, thou alone
Shouldst have the grace to die not, but to live
And loose nor change one pulse of song, one tone
Of all that were thy lady's and thine own,
Thy lady's whom thou criedst on to forgive,
Thou, priest and sacrifice on the altar-stone
Where none may worship not of all that live,
Love's priestess, errant on dark ways diverse;
If this were grace indeed for Love to give,
If this indeed were blessing and no curse.

Love's priestess, mad with pain and joy of song,
Song's priestess, mad with joy and pain of love,
Name above all names that are lights above,
We have loved, praised, pitied, crowned and done thee wrong.

O thou past praise and pity; thou the sole
Utterly deathless, perfect only and whole
Immortal, body and soul.
For over all whom time hath overpast
The shadow of sleep inexorable is cast,
The implacable sweet shadow of perfect sleep
That gives not back what life gives death to keep;
Yea, all that lived and loved and sang and sinned
Are all borne down death's cold sweet soundless wind
That blows all night and knows not whom its breath,
Darkling, may touch to death:
But one that wind hath touched and changed not,—one
Whose body and soul are parcel of the sun;
One that earth's fire could burn not, nor the sea
Quench; nor might human doom take hold on thee;
All praise, all pity, all dreams have done thee wrong,
All love, with eyes love-blinded from above;
Song's priestess, mad with joy and pain of love,
Love's priestess, mad with pain and joy of song.

Hast thou none other answer then for me
Than the air may have of thee,
Or the earth's warm woodlands girdling with green girth
Thy secret sleepless burning life on earth,
Or even the sea that once, being woman crowned
And girt with fire and glory of anguish round,
Thou wert so fain to seek to, fain to crave
If she would hear thee and save
And give thee comfort of thy great green grave?
Because I have known thee always who thou art,
Thou knowest, have known thee to thy heart's own heart,
Nor ever have given light ear to storied song
That did thy sweet name sweet unwitting wrong,
Nor ever have called thee nor would call for shame,
Thou knowest, but inly by thine only name,
Sappho—because I have known thee and loved, hast thou
None other answer now?
As brother and sister were we, child and bird,
Since thy first Lesbian word
Flamed on me, and I knew not whence I knew
This was the song that struck my whole soul through,
Pierced my keen spirit of sense with edge more keen,
Even when I knew not,—even ere sooth was seen,—
When thou was but the tawny sweet winged thing
Whose cry was but of spring.

And yet even so thine ear should hear me—yea,
Hear me this nightfall by this northland bay,
Even for their sake whose loud good word I had,
Singing of thee in the all-beloved clime
Once, where the windy wine of spring makes mad
Our sisters of Majano, who kept time
Clear to my choral rhyme.
Yet was the song acclaimed of these aloud
Whose praise had made mute humbleness misproud,
The song with answering song applauded thus,
But of that Daulian dream of Itylus.
So but for love's love haply was it—nay,
How else?—that even their song took my song's part,
For love of love and sweetness of sweet heart,
Or god-given glorious madness of mid May
And heat of heart and hunger and thirst to sing,
Full of the new wine of the wind of spring.

Or if this were not, and it be not sin
To hold myself in spirit of thy sweet kin,
In heart and spirit of song;
If this my great love do thy grace no wrong,
Thy grace that gave me grace to dwell therein;
If thy gods thus be my gods, and their will
Made my song part of thy song—even such part
As man's hath of God's heart—
And my life like as thy life to fulfil;
What have our gods then given us? Ah, to thee,
Sister, much more, much happier than to me,
Much happier things they have given, and more of grace
Than falls to man's light race;
For lighter are we, all our love and pain
Lighter than thine, who knowest of time or place
Thus much, that place nor time

Can heal or hurt or lull or change again
The singing soul that makes his soul sublime
Who hears the far fall of its fire-fledged rhyme
Fill darkness as with bright and burning rain
Till all the live gloom inly glows, and light
Seems with the sound to cleave the core of night.

The singing soul that moves thee, and that moved
When thou wast woman, and their songs divine
Who mixed for Grecian mouths heaven's lyric wine
Fell dumb, fell down reproved
Before one sovereign Lesbian song of thine.
That soul, though love and life had fain held fast,
Wind-winged with fiery music, rose and past
Through the indrawn hollow of earth and heaven and hell.
As through some strait sea-shell
The wide sea's immemorial song,—the sea
That sings and breathes in strange men's ears of thee
How in her barren bride-bed, void and vast,
Even thy soul sang itself to sleep at last.

To sleep? Ah, then, what song is this, that here
Makes all the night one ear,
One ear fulfilled and mad with music, one
Heart kindling as the heart of heaven, to hear
A song more fiery than the awakening sun
Sings, when his song sets fire
To the air and clouds that build the dead night's pyre?
O thou of divers-coloured mind, O thou
Deathless, God's daughter subtle-souled—lo, now,
Now to the song above all songs, in flight
Higher than the day-star's height, [night!
And sweet as sound the moving wings of
Thou of the divers-coloured seat—behold,
Her very song of old!—
O deathless, O God's daughter subtle-souled!
That same cry through this boskage overhead
Rings round reiterated,
Palpitates as the last palpitated,
The last that panted through her lips and died
Not down this grey north sea's half sapped cliff-side
That crumbles toward the coastline, year by year
More near the sands and near;
The last loud lyric fiery cry she cried, [here.
Heard once on heights Leucadian,—heard not
Not here; for this that fires our northland
This is the song that made [night.
Love fearful, even the heart of love afraid,
With the great anguish of its great delight.
No swan-song, no far-fluttering half-drawn breath,
No word that love of love's sweet nature saith,
No dirge that lulls the narrowing lids of death,
No healing hymn of peace-prevented strife,—
This is her song of life.

I loved thee,—hark, one tenderer note than all—
Atthis, of old time, once—one low long fall,
Sighing—one long low lovely loveless call,
Dying—one pause in song so flamelike fast—
Atthis, long since in old time overpast—
One soft first pause and last.
One,—then the old rage of rapture's fieriest rain
Storms all the music-maddened night again.

Child of God, close craftswoman, I beseech thee
Bid not ache nor agony break nor master,
Lady, my spirit—
O thou her mistress, might her cry not reach thee?
Our Lady of all men's loves, could Love go past her,
Pass, and not hear it?

She hears not as she heard not; hears not me
O treble-natured mystery,—how should she
Hear, or give ear?—who heard and heard not thee;
Heard, and went past, and heard not; but all time
Hears all that all the ravin of his years
Hath cast not wholly out of all men's ears
And dulled to death with deep dense funeral chime
Of their reiterate rhyme.
And now of all songs uttering all her praise,
All hers who had thy praise and did thee wrong,
Abides one song yet of her lyric days,
Thine only, this thy song.

O soul triune, woman and god and bird,
Man, man at least has heard.
All ages call thee conqueror, and thy cry
The mightiest as the least beneath the sky
Whose heart was ever set to song, or stirred
With wind of mounting music blown more high
Than wildest wing may fly,
Hath heard or hears,—even Æschylus as I.
But when thy name was woman, and thy word

Human,—then haply, surely then meseems
This thy bird's note was heard on earth of none,
Of none save only in dreams.
In all the world then surely was but one
Song; as in heaven at highest one sceptred sun
Regent, on earth here surely without fail
One only, one imperious nightingale.
Dumb was the field, the woodland mute, the lawn
Silent; the hill was tongueless as the vale
Even when the last fair waif of cloud that felt
Its heart beneath the coloring moonrays melt,
At high midnoon of midnight half withdrawn,
Bared all the sudden deep divine moondawn.
Then, unsaluted by her twin-born tune,
That later timeless morning of the moon
Rose past its hour of moonrise; clouds gave way
To the old reconquering ray,
But no song answering made it more than day;
No cry of song by night
Shot fire into the cloud-constraining light.
One only, one Æolian island heard
Thrill, but through no bird's throat,
In one strange manlike maiden's godlike note,
The song of all these as a single bird.
Till the sea's portal was as funeral gate
For that sole singer in all time's ageless date
Singled and signed for so triumphal fate,
All nightingales but one in all the world
All her sweet life were silent; only then,
When her life's wing of womanhood was furled,
Their cry, this cry of thine was heard again,
As of me now, of any born of men.

Through sleepless clear spring nights filled full of thee,
Rekindled here, thy ruling song has thrilled
The deep dark air and subtle tender sea
And breathless hearts with one bright sound fulfilled.
Or at midnoon to me
Swimming, and birds about my happier head
Skimming, one smooth soft way by water and air,
To these my bright born brethren and to me
Hath not the clear wind borne or seemed to bear
A song wherein all earth and heaven and sea
Were molten in one music made of thee
To enforce us, O our sister of the shore,
Look once in heart back landward and adore?
For songless were we sea-mews, yet had we
More joy than all things joyful of thee—more,
Haply, than all things happiest; nay, save thee
In thy strong rapture of imperious joy
Too high for heart of sea-borne bird or boy,
What living things were happiest if not we?
But knowing not love nor change nor wrath nor wrong,
No more we knew of song.

Song, and the secrets of it, and their might,
What blessings curse it and what curses bless,
I know them since my spirit had first in sight,
Clear as thy song's words or the live sun's light,
The small dark body's Lesbian loveliness
That held the fire eternal; eye and ear
Were as a god's to see, a god's to hear,
Through all his hours of daily and nightly chime,
The sundering of the two-edged spear of time:
The spear that pierces even the sevenfold shields
Of mightiest Memory, mother of all songs made,
And wastes all songs as roseleaves kissed and frayed
As here the harvest of the foam-flowered fields;
But thine the spear may waste not that he wields
Since first the God whose soul is man's live breath,
The sun whose face hath our sun's face for shade,
Put all the light of life and love and death
Too strong for life, but not for love too strong
Where pain makes peace with pleasure in thy song,
And in thine heart, where love and song make strife,
Fire everlasting of eternal life.

THE GARDEN OF CYMODOCE.

SEA, and bright wind, and heaven of ardent air,
More dear than all things earth-born ; O to me
Mother more dear than love's own longing, sea,
More than love's eyes are, fair,
Be with my spirit of song as wings to bear,
As fire to feel and breathe and brighten ; be
A spirit of sense more deep of deity,
A light of love, if love may be, more strong
In me than very song.
For song I have loved with second love, but thee,
Thee first, thee, mother ; ere my songs had breath,
That love of loves, whose bondage makes man free,
Was in me strong as death.
And seeing no slave may love thee, no, not one
That loves not freedom more,
And more for thy sake loves her, and for hers
Thee : or that hates not, on whate'er thy shore
Or what thy wave soever, all things done
Of man beneath the sun
In his despite and thine, to cross and curse
Your light and song that as with lamp and verse
Guide safe the strength of our sphered universe,
Thy breath it was, thou knowest, and none but thine,
That taught me love of one thing more divine.

Ah, yet my youth was old,
Its first years dead and cold
As last year's autumn's gold,
And all my spirit of singing sick and sad and sere,
Or ever I might behold
The fairest of thy fold
Engirt, enringed, enrolled,
In all thy flower-sweet flock of islands dear and near.

Yet in my heart I deemed
The fairest things, meseemed,
Truth, dreaming, ever dreamed,
Had made mine eyes already like a god's to see :
Of all sea-things that were
Clothed on with water and air,
That none could live more fair
Than thy sweet love long since had shown for love to me.

I knew not, mother of mine,
That one birth more divine
Than all births else of thine
That hang like flowers or jewels on thy deep soft breast
Was left for me to shine
Above thy girdling line
Of bright and breathing brine,
To take mine eyes with rapture and my sense with rest.

That this was left for me,
Mother, to have of thee,
To touch, to taste, to see,
To feel as fire fulfilling all my blood and breath,
As wine of living fire
Keen as the heart's desire
That makes the heart its pyre
And on its burning visions burns itself to death.

For here of all thy waters, here of all
Thy windy ways the wildest, and beset
As some beleaguered city's war-breached wall
With deaths enmeshed all round it in deep net,
Thick sown with rocks deadlier than steel, and fierce
With loud cross-countering currents, where the ship
Flags, flickering like a wind-bewildered leaf,
The densest weft of waves that prow may pierce
Coils round the sharpest warp of shoals that dip
Suddenly, scarce well under for one brief
Keen breathing space between the streams adverse,
Scarce showing the fanged edge of one hungering lip
Or one tooth lipless of the ravening reef ;
And midmost of the murderous water's web

All around it stretched and spun,
Laughs, reckless of rough tide and raging ebb
The loveliest thing that shines against the sun.

O flower of all wind flowers and sea-flowers,
Made lovelier by love of the sea
Than thy golden own field-flowers, or tree-flowers
Like foam of the sea-facing tree!
No foot but the sea-mew's there settles
On the spikes of thine anthers like horns,
With snow-colored spray for thy petals,
Black rocks for thy thorns.

Was it here, in the waste of his waters,
That the lordly north wind, when his love
On the fairest of many king's daughters
Bore down for a spoil from above,
Chose forth of all farthest far islands,
As a haven to harbor her head,
Of all lowlands on earth and all highlands,
His bride-worthy bed?

Or haply, my sea-flower, he found thee
Made fast as with anchors to land,
And broke, that his waves might be round thee,
Thy fetters like rivets of sand?
And afar by the blast of him drifted
Thy blossom of beauty was borne,
As a lark by the heart in her lifted
To mix with the morn?

By what rapture of rage, by what vision
Of a heavenlier heaven than above,
Was he moved to devise thy divison
From the land as a rest for his love?
As a nest when his wings would remeasure
The ways were of old they would be,
As a bride-bed upbuilt for his pleasure
By sea-rock and sea?

For in no deeps of midmost inland May
More flower-bright flowers the hawthorn, or more sweet
Swells the wild gold of the earth for wandering feet;
For on no northland way
Crowds the close whin-bloom closer, set like thee
With thorns about for fangs of sea-rock shown
Through blithe lips of the bitter brine to lee;
Nor blithelier landward comes the sea-wind blown,
Nor blithelier leaps the land-wind back to sea:
Nor louder springs the living song of birds
To shame our sweetest words.
And in the narrowest of thine hollowest hold
For joy thine aspens quiver as though for cold,
And many a self-lit flower-illumined tree
Outlaughs with snow-bright or with rose-bright glee
The laughter of the fields whose laugh is gold.
Yea, even from depth to height,
Even thine own beauty with its own delight
Fulfils thine heart in thee an hundredfold
Beyond the larger hearts of islands bright
With less intense contraction of desire
Self-satiate, centred in its own deep fire;
Of shores not self-enchanted and entranced
By heavenly severance from all shadow of mirth
Or mourning upon earth;
As thou, by no similitude enhanced,
By no fair foil made fairer, but alone
Fair as could be no beauty save thine own,
And wondrous as no world-beholden wonder:
Throned, with the world's most perilous sea for throne,
And praised from all its choral throats of thunder.

Yet one praise hast thou, holier
Than praise of theirs may be,
To exalt thee, wert thou lowlier
Than all that take the sea
With shores whence waves ebb slowlier
Than these fall off from thee:

That One, whose name gives glory,
One man whose life makes light,
One crowned and throned in story
Above all empire's height,
Came, where thy straits run hoary,
To hold thee fast in sight;

With hallowing eyes to hold thee,
With rapturous heart to read,
To encompass and enfold thee
With love whence all men feed,
To brighten and behold thee,
Who is mightiest of man's seed:
More strong than strong disaster,
For fate and fear too strong;
Earth's friend, whose eyes look past her,
Whose hands would purge of wrong;
Our lord, our light, our master,
Whose word sums up all song.

Be it April or September
That plays his perfect part,
Burn June or blow December,

Thou canst not in thine heart
But rapturously remember,
All heavenlike as thou art,

Whose footfall made thee fairer,
Whose passage more divine,
Whose hand, our thunder-bearer,
Held fire that bade thee shine
With subtler glory and rarer
Than thrills the sun's own shrine.

Who knows how then his godlike banished gaze
Turned haply from its goal of natural days
And homeward hunger for the clear French clime,
Toward English earth, whereunder now the Accursed
Rots, in the hate of all men's hearts inhearsed,
A carrion ranker to the sense of time
For that sepulchral gift of stone and lime
By royal grace laid on it, less of weight
Than the load laid by fate,
Fate, misbegotten child of his own crime,
Son of as foul a bastard-bearing birth
As even his own on earth;
Less heavy than the load of cursing piled
By loyal grace of all souls undefiled
On one man's head, whose reeking soul made rotten
The loathed live corpse on earth once misbegotten?
But when our Master's homeless feet were here,
France yet was foul with joy more foul than fear,
And slavery chosen, more vile by choice of chance
Than dull damnation of inheritance
From Russian year to year.
Alas fair mother of men, alas my France,
What ailed thee so to fall, that wert so dear
For all men's sake to all men, in such trance,
Plague-stricken? Had the very Gods, that saw
Thy glory lighten on us for a law,
Thy gospel go before us for a guide,
Had these waxed envious of our love and awe
Or was it less their envy than thy pride
That bared thy breast for the obscene vulture-claw,
High priestess, by whose mouth Love prophesied
That fate should yet mean freedom? Howsoever,
That hour, the helper of men's hearts, we praise,
Which blots out of man's book of after days
The name above all names abhorred for ever.
And His name shall we praise not, whom thee flowers,
These rocks and ravening waters bound for girth
Round this wild starry spanlong plot of earth,
Beheld, the mightier for those heavier hours
That bowed his heart not down
Nor marred one crowning blossom of his crown?
For surely, might we say,
Even from the dark deep sea-gate that makes way
Through channelled darkness for the darkling day
Hardly to let men's faltering footfall win
The sunless passage in,
Where breaks a world aflower against the sun,
A small sweet world of wave-encompassed wonders,
Kept from the wearier landward world asunder
With violence of wild waters, and with thunder
Of many winds as one,
To where the keen sea-current grinds and frets
The black bright sheer twin flameless Altarlets
That lack no live blood-sacrifice they crave
Of shipwreck and the shrine-subservient wave,
Having for priest the storm-wind, and for choir
Lightnings and clouds whose prayers and praise are fire,
All the isle acclaimed him coming; she, the least
Of all things loveliest that the sea's love hides
From strange men's insult, walled about with tides
That bid strange guests back from her flower strewn feast,
Set all her fields aflower, her flowers aflame,
To applaud him that he came.
Nor surely flashed not something of delight
Through that steep strait of rock whose twin cliffed height
Links crag with crag reiterate, land with land
By one sheer thread of narrowing precipice
Bifront, that binds and sunders
Abyss from hollower imminent abyss
And wilder isle with island, blind for bliss
Of sea that lightens and of wind that thunders;
Nor pealed not surely back from deep to steep
Reverberate acclamation, steep to deep
Inveterately reclaiming and replying
Praise, and response applausive; nor the sea,
For all the sea-wind's crying,
Knew not the song her sister, even as she

Thundering, or like her confluent spring-tides brightening,
And like her darkness lightening ;
The song that moved about him silent, now
Both soundless wings refolded and recurled
On that Promethean brow,
Then quivering as for flight that wakes the world.

From the roots of the rocks underlying the gulfs that engird it around
Was the isle not enkindled with light of him landing, or thrilled not with sound ?
Yea, surely the sea like a harper laid hand on the shore as a lyre,
As the lyre in his own for a birthright of old that was given of his sire,
And the hand of the child was put forth on the chords yet alive and aflame
From the land of the God that had wrought it in heaven ; and the hand was the same.
And the tongue of the child spake, singing ; and never a note that he sang,
But the strings made answer unstricken, as though for the God they rang.
And the eyes of the child shone, lightening ; and touched as by life at his nod,
They shuddered with music, and quickened as though from the glance of the God.
So trembled the heart of the hills and the rocks to receive him, and yearned
With desirous delight of his presence and love that beholding him burned.
Yea, down through the mighty twin hollows where never the sunlight shall be,
Deep sunk under imminent earth, and subdued to the stress of the sea,
That feel when the dim week changes by change of their tides in the dark,
As the wave sinks under within them, reluctant, removed from its mark,
Even there in the terror of twilight in bloom with its blossoms ablush,
Did a sense of him touch not the gleam of their flowers with a fierier flush ?
Though the sun they behold not for ever, yet knew they not over them One
Whose soul was the soul of the morning, whose song was the song of the sun ?
But the secrets inviolate of sunlight in hollows untrodden of day,
Shall he dream what are these who beholds not ? or he that hath seen, shall he say ?
For the path is for passage of sea-mews ; and he that hath glided and leapt
Over sea-grass and sea-rock, alighting as one from a citadel crept
That his foemen beleaguer, descending by darkness and stealth, at the last
Peers under, and all is as hollow to hellward, agape and aghast.
But afloat and afar in the darkness a tremulous color subsides
From the crimson high crest of the purple-peaked roof to the soft-colored sides
That brighten as ever they widen till downward the level is won
Of the soundless and colorless water that knows not the sense of the sun :
From the crown of the culminant arch to the floor of the lakelet abloom,
One infinite blossom of blossoms innumerable aflush through the gloom.
All under the deeps of the darkness are glimmering ; all over impends
An immeasurable infinite flower of the dark that dilates and descends,
That exults and expands in its breathless and blind efflorescence of heart
As it broadens and bows to the wave-ward, and breathes not, and hearkens apart.
As a beaker inverse at a feast on Olympus, exhausted of wine,
But inlaid as with rose from the lips of Dione that left it divine :
From the lips everliving of laughter and love everlasting, that leave
In the cleft of his heart who shall kiss them a snake to corrode it and cleave.
So glimmers the gloom into glory, the glory recoils into gloom
That the eye of the sun could not kindle, the lip not of Love could relume.
So darkens reverted the cup that the kiss of her mouth set on fire :
So blackens a brand in his eyeshot asmoulder awhile from the pyre.
From the beam from beneath and without it refrangent again from the wave
Strikes up through the portal a ghostly reverse on the dome of the cave,
On the depth of the dome ever darkling and dim to the crown of its arc :
That the sun-colored tapestry, sunless for ever, may soften the dark.
But within through the side-seen archway aglimmer again from the right
Is the seal of the sea's tide set on the mouth of the mystery of night.
And the seal on the seventh day breaks but a little, that man by its mean

May behold what the sun hath not looked on,
the stars of the night have not seen.

Even like that hollow-bosomed rose, inverse
And infinite, the heaven of thy vast verse,
Our Master, over all our souls impends,
Imminent ; we, with heart-enkindled eyes
Upwondering, search the music-moulded skies
Sphere by sweet sphere, concordant as it blends
Light of bright sound, sound of clear light, in one,
As all the stars found utterance through the sun.
And all that heaven is like a rose in bloom,
Flower-colored, where its own sun's fires illume
As from one central and imperious heart
The whole sky's every part :
But lightening still and darkling downward. lo
The light and darkness of it,
The leaping of the lamping levin afar
Between the full moon and the sunset star,
The war-song of the sounding skies aglow,
That have the herald thunder for their prophet .
From north to south the lyric lights that leap,
The tragic sundawns reddening east and west
As with bright blood from one Promethean breast,
The peace of noon that strikes the sea to sleep,
The wail over the world of all that weep,
The peace of night when death brings life on rest.
Goddess who gatherest all the herded waves
Into thy great sweet pastureless green fold,
Even for our love of old,
I pray thee by thy power that slays and saves,
Take thou my song of this thy flower to keep
Who hast my heart in hold ;
And from thine high place of thy garden-steep,
Where one sheer terrace oversees thy deep
From the utmost rock reared height
Down even to thy dear depths of night and light,
Take my song's salutation ; and on me
Breathe back the benediction of thy sea.

BIRTHDAY ODE

FOR THE ANNIVERSARY FESTIVAL OF

VICTOR HUGO.

FEBRUARY 26TH, 1880.

Between two seas the sea-bird's wing makes halt,
Wind-weary ; while with lifting head he waits
For breath to reinspire him from the gates
That open still toward sunrise on the vault
High-domed of morning, and in flight's default
With spreading sense of spirit anticipates
What new sea now may lure beyond the straits
His wings exulting that her winds exalt
And fill them full as sails to seaward spread,
Fulfilled with fair speed's promise. Pass, my song,
Forth to the heaven of thy desire and dread,
The presence of our lord, long loved and long
Far off above beholden, who to thee
Was as light kindling all a windy sea.

BIRTHDAY ODE

FOR THE ANNIVERSARY FESTIVAL OF VICTOR HUGO, FEBRUARY 26, 1880.

SPRING, born in heaven ere many a spring-time flown, *strophe* 1.
Dead spring that sawest on earth
A babe of deathless birth,
A flower of rosier flowerage than thine own,
A glory of goodlier godhead ; even this day,
That floods the mist of February with May,
And strikes death dead with sunlight, and the breath
Whereby the deadly doers are done to death,
They that in day's despite
Would crown the imperial night,
And in deep hate of insubmissive spring
Rethrone the royal winter for a king,
This day that casts the days of darkness down
Low as a broken crown,
We call thee from the gulf of deeds and days,
Deathless and dead, to hear us whom we praise.

A light of many lights about thine head, *antistrophe* 1.
Lights manifold and one,
Stars molten in a sun,
A sun of divers beams incorporated,
Compact of confluent aureoles, each more fair
Than man, save only at highest of man, may wear,
So didst thou rise, when this our grey-grown age
Had trod two paces of his pilgrimage,
Two paces through the gloom
From his fierce father's tomb,
Led by cross lights of lightnings, and the flame
That burned in darkness round one darkling name ;
So didst thou rise, nor knewest thy glory, O thou
Re-risen upon us now,
The glory given thee for a grace to give,
And take the praise of all men's hearts that live.

First in the dewy ray *epode* 1.
Ere dawn be slain of day
The fresh crowned lilies of discrowned kings' prime
Sprang splendid as of old
With moonlight-coloured gold
And rays refract from the oldworld heaven of time ;
Pale with proud light of stars decreased
In westward wane reluctant from the conquering east.
But even between their golden olden bloom *str.* 2
Strange flowers of wildwood glory,
With frost and moonshine hoary,
Thrust up the new growths of their green-leaved gloom,
Red buds of ballad blossom, where the dew
Blushed as with bloodlike passion, and its hue
Was as the life and love of hearts on flame,
And fire from forth of each live chalice came :
Young sprays of elder song,
Stem straight and petal strong,
Bright foliage with dark frondage overlaid,
And light the lovelier for its lordlier shade ;
And morn and even made loud in woodland lone
With cheer of clarions blown,
And through the tournay's clash and clarion's cheer
Laugh to laugh echoing, tear washed off by tear.

Then eastward far past northland lea and lawn *ant.* 2.
Beneath a heavier light
Of stormier day and night
Began the music of the heaven of dawn ,
Bright sound of battle along the Grecian waves,
Loud light of thunder above the Median graves,
New strife, new song on Æschylean seas,
Canaris risen above Themistocles ;
Old glory of warrior ghosts
Shed fresh on filial hosts,
With dewfall redder than the dews of day,
And earth-born lightnings out of bloodbright spray ;
Then through the flushed grey gloom on shadowy sheaves
Low flights of falling leaves ;
And choirs of birds transfiguring as they throng
All the world's twilight and the soul's to song.
Voices more dimly deep *ep.* 2.
Than the inmost heart of sleep,
And tenderer than the rose-mouthed morning lips ;

And midmost of them heard
The viewless water's word,
The sea's breath in the wind's wing and the ship's,
That bids one swell and sound and smite
And rend that other in sunder as with fangs by night.

But ah! the glory of shadow and mingling ray,
The story of morn and even
Whose tale was writ in heaven
And had for scroll the night, for scribe the day!
For scribe the prophet of the morning, far
Exalted over twilight and her star;
For scroll beneath his Apollonian hand
The dim twin wastes of sea and glimmering land.
Hark, on the hill-wind, clear
For all men's hearts to hear
Sound like a stream at nightfall from the steep
That all time's depths might answer, deep to deep,
With trumpet-measures of triumphal wail
From windy vale to vale,
The crying of one for love that strayed and sinned
Whose brain took madness of the mountain wind.

Between the birds of brighter and duskier wing,
What mightier-moulded forms
Girt with red clouds and storms
Mix their strong hearts with theirs that soar and sing?
Before the storm-blast blown of death's dark horn
The marriage moonlight withers, that the morn
For two made one may find three made by death
One ruin at the blasting of its breath;
Clothed with heart's flame renewed
And strange new maidenhood,
Faith lightens on the lips that bloomed for hire
Pure as the lightning of love's first-born fire:
Wide-eyed and patient ever, till the curse
Find where to fall and pierce,
Keen expiation whets with edge more dread
A father's wrong to smite a father's head.

Borgia, supreme from birth
As loveliest born on earth
Since earth bore ever women that were fair;
Scarce known of her own house
If daughter or sister or spouse;
Who holds men's hearts yet helpless with her hair;
The direst of divine things made,
Bows down her amorous aureole half suffused with shade.

As red the fire-scathed royal northland bloom,
That left our story a name
Dyed through with blood and flame
Ere her life shrivelled from a fierier doom
Than theirs her priests bade pass from earth in fire
To slake the thirst of God their Lord's desire:
As keen the blast of love-enkindled fate
That burst the Paduan tyrant's guarded gate:
As sad the softer moan
Made one with music's own
For one whose feet made music as they fell
On ways by loveless love made hot from hell:
But higher than these and all the song thereof
The perfect heart of love,
The heart by fraud and hate once crucified,
That, dying, gave thanks, and in thanksgiving died.

Above the windy walls that rule the Rhine
A noise of eagles' wings
And wintry war-time rings,
With roar of ravage trampling corn and vine
And storm of wrathful wassail dashed with song
And under these the watch of wreakless wrong,
With fire of eyes anhungered; and above
These, the light of the stricken eyes of love,
The faint sweet eyes that follow
The wind-outwinging swallow,
And face athirst with young wan yearning mouth
Turned after toward the unseen all-golden south,
Hopeless to see the birds back ere the wane,
Or the leaves born again;
And still the might and music mastering fate
Of life more strong than death and love than hate.

In special strength biform
Stand the twin sons of storm
Transfigured by transmission of one hand
That gives the new-born time
Their semblance more sublime
Than once it lightened over each man's land;

There Freedom's winged and wide-
mouthed hound,
And here our high Dictator, in his son dis-
crowned.

What strong-limbed shapes of kindred throng
round these
Before, between, behind,
Sons born of one man's mind,
Fed at his hands and fostered round his knees?
Fear takes the spirit in thraldom at his nod,
And pity makes it as the spirit of God,
As his own soul that from her throne above
Sheds on all souls of men her showers of love,
On all earth's evil and pain
Pours mercy forth as rain
And comfort as the dewfall on dry land;
And feeds with pity from a faultless hand
All by their own fault stricken, all cast out
By all men's scorn or doubt,
Or with their own hands wounded, or by fate
Brought into bondage of men's fear or hate.

In violence of strange visions north and south
Confronted, east and west,
With frozen or fiery breast,
Eyes fixed or fevered, pale or bloodred mouth,
Kept watch about his dawn-enkindled dreams;
But ere high noon a light of nearer beams
Made his young heaven of manhood more be-
nign,
And love made soft his lips with spiritual wine,
And left them fired, and fed
With sacramental bread,
And sweet with honey of tenderer words than
tears
To feed men's hopes and fortify men's fears,
And strong to silence with benignant breath
The lips that doom to death,
And swift with speech like fire in fiery lands
To melt the steel's edge in the headsman's
hands.

Higher than they rose of old,
New builded now, behold,
The live great likeness of Our Lady's
towers;
And round them like a dove
Wounded, and sick with love,
One fair ghost moving, crowned with fateful
flowers,
Watched yet with eyes of bloodred lust
And eyes of love's heart broken and unbroken
trust.

But sadder always under shadowier skies,
More pale and sad and clear
Waxed always, drawn more near,
The face of Duty lit with Love's own eyes;
Till the awful hands that culled in rosier
hours
From fairy-footed fields of wild old flowers
And sorcerous woods of Rhineland, green and
hoary,
Young children's chaplets of enchanted story,
The great kind hands that showed
Exile its homeward road,
And, as man's helper made his foeman God,
Of pity and mercy wrought themselves a rod,
And opened for Napoleon's wondering kin
France, and bade enter in,
And threw for all the doors of refuge wide,
Took to them lightning in the thunder-tide.

For storm on earth above had risen from under,
Out of the hollow of hell,
Such storm as never fell
From darkest deeps of heaven distract with
thunder;
A cloud of cursing, past all shape of thought,
More foul than foulest dreams, and overfraught
With all obscene things and obscure of birth
That ever made infection of man's earth;
Having all hell for cloak
Wrapped round it as a smoke
And in its womb such offspring so defiled
As earth bare never for her loathliest child,
Rose, brooded, reddened, broke, and with its
breath
Put France to poisonous death;
Yea, far as heaven's red laboring eye could
glance,
France was not, save in men cast forth of
France.

Then,—while the plague-sore grew
Two darkling decades through,
And rankled in the festering flesh of time,—
Where darkness binds and frees
The wildest of wild seas
In fierce mutations of the unslumbering
clime,
There, sleepless too, o'er shuddering wrong
One hand appointed shook the reddening
scourge of song.

And through the lightnings of the apparent
word
Dividing shame's dense night
Sounds lovelier than the light

And light more sweet than song from night's own bird
Mixed each their hearts with other, till the gloom
Was glorious as with all the stars in bloom,
Sonorous as with all the spheres in chime
Heard far through flowering heaven : the sea, sublime
Once only with its own
Old wind's and waters' tone,
Sad only or glad with its own glory, and crowned
With its own light, and thrilled with its own sound,
Learnt now their song, more sweet than heaven's may be,
Who pass away by sea ;
The song that takes of old love's land farewell,
With pulse of plangent water like a knell.
And louder ever and louder and yet more loud
Till night be shamed of morn
Rings the Black Huntsman's horn
Through darkening deeps beneath the covering cloud,
Till all the wild beasts of the darkness hear ;
Till the Czar quake, till Austria cower for fear,
Till the king breathe not, till the priest wax pale,
Till spies and slayers on seats of judgment quail,
Till mitre and cowl bow down
And crumble as a crown,
Till Cæsar driven to the lair and hounded Pope
Reel breathless and drop heartless out of hope,
And one the uncleanest kinless beast of all
Lower than his fortune fall ;
The wolfish waif of casual empire, born
To turn all hate and horror cold with scorn.
Yea, even at night's full noon
Light's birth-song brake in tune,
Spake, witnessing that with us one must be,
God ; naming so by name
That priests have brought to shame
The strength whose scourge sounds on the smitten sea ;
The mystery manifold of might
Which bids the wind give back to night the things of night.

Even God, the unknown of all time ; force or thought,
Nature or fate or will,
Clothed round with good and ill,
Veiled and revealed of all things and of nought,
Hooded and helmed with mystery, girt and shod
With light and darkness, unapparent God.
Him the high prophet o'er his wild work bent
Found indivisible ever and immanent
At hidden heart of truth,
In forms of age and youth
Transformed and transient ever ; masked and crowned,
From all bonds loosened and with all bonds bound,
Diverse and one with all things ; love and hate,
Earth, and the starry state
Of heaven immeasurable, and years that flee
As clouds and winds and rays across the sea.

But higher than stars and deeper than the waves
Of day and night and morrow
That roll for all time, sorrow
Keeps ageless watch over perpetual graves.
From dawn to morning of the soul in flower,
Through toils and dreams and visions, to that hour
When all the deeps were opened, and one doom
Took two sweet lives to embrace them and entomb,
The strong song plies its wing
That makes the darkness ring
And the deep light reverberate sound as deep ;
Song soft as flowers or grass more soft than sleep,
Song bright as heaven above the mounting bird,
Song like a god's tear heard
Falling, fulfilled of life and death and light,
And all the stars and all the shadow of night.

Till, when its flight hath past
Time's loftiest mark and last,
The goal where good kills evil with a kiss
And Darkness in God's sight
Grows as his brother Light,
And heaven and hell one heart whence all the abyss
Throbs with love's music ; from his trance
Love waking leads it home to her who stayed in France.

But now from all the world old winds of the air

One blast of record rings
As from time's hidden springs
With roar of rushing wings and fires that bear
Toward north and south sonorous, east and west,
Forth of the dark wherein its records rest
The story told of the ages, writ nor sung
By man's hand ever nor by mortal tongue
Till, godlike with desire,
One tongue of man took fire,
One hand laid hold upon the lightning, one
Rose up to bear time witness what the sun
Had seen, and what the moon and stars of night
Beholding lost not light:
From dawn to dusk what ways man wandering trod
Even through the twilight of the gods to God.

From dawn of man and woman twain and one,
When the earliest dews impearled
The front of all the world
Ringed with aurorean aureole of the sun,
To days that saw Christ's tears and hallowing breath
Put life for love's sake in the lips of death,
And years as waves whose brine was fire, whose foam
Blood, and the ravage of Neronian Rome;
And the eastern crescent's horn
Mightier awhile than morn;
And knights whose lives were flights of eagles' wings,
And lives like snakes' lives of engendering kings;
And all the ravin of all the swords that reap
Lives cast as sheaves on heap
From all the billowing harvest-fields of fight;
And sounds of love-songs lovelier than the light.

The grim dim thrones of the east
Set for death's riotous feast
Round the bright board where darkling centuries wait,
And servile slaughter, mute,
Feeds power with fresh red fruit,
Glitter and groan with mortal food of fate;
And throne and cup and lamp's bright breath
Bear witness to their lord of only night and death.

Dead freedom by live empire lies defiled,
And murder at his feet
Plies lust with wine and meat,
With offering of an old man and a child
With holy body and blood, inexpiable
Communion in the sacrament of hell,
Till, reeking from their monstrous eucharist,
The lips wax cold that murdered where they kissed,
And empire in mid feast
Fall as a slaughtered beast
Headless, and ease men's hungering hearts of fear
Lest God were none in heaven, to see nor hear,
And purge his own pollution with the flood
Poured of his black base blood
So first found healing, poisonous as it poured;
And on the clouds the archangel cleanse his sword

As at the word unutterable that made
Of day and night division,
From vision on to vision,
From dream to dream, from darkness into shade,
From sunshine into sunlight, moves and lives
The steersman's eye, the helming hand that gives
Life to the wheels and wings that whirl along
The immeasurable impulse of the sphere of song
Through all the eternal years,
Beyond all stars and spheres,
Beyond the washing of the waves of time,
Beyond all heights where no thought else may climb,
Beyond the darkling dust of suns that were,
Past height and depth of air;
And in the abyss whence all things move that are
Finds only living Love, the sovereign star.

Nor less the weight and worth
Found even of love on earth
To wash all stain of tears and sins away,
On dying lips alit
That living knew not it,
In the winged shape of song with death to play:
To warm young children with its wings,
And try with fire the heart elect for godlike things.

For all worst wants of all most miserable
With divine hands to deal
All balms and herbs that heal,
Among all woes whereunder poor men dwell

Our Master sent his servant Love, to be
On earth his witness ; but the strange deep sea,
Mother of life and death inextricate,
What work should Love do there, to war with fate ?
Yet there must Love too keep
At heart of the eyeless deep
Watch, and wage war wide-eyed with all its wonders,
Lower than the lightnings of its waves, and thunders
Of seas less monstrous than the births they bred ;
Keep high there heart and head,
And conquer : then for prize of all toils past
Feel the sea close them in again at last.

A day of direr doom arisen thereafter
With cloud and fire in strife
Lightens and darkens life
Round one by man's hand masked with living laughter,
A man by men bemonstered, but by love
Watched with blind eyes as of a wakeful dove
And wooed by lust, that in her rosy den
As fire on flesh feeds on the souls of men,
To take the intense impure
Burnt-offering of her lure,
Divine and dark and bright and naked, strange
With ravenous thirst of life reversed and change,
As though the very heaven should shrivel and swell
With hunger after hell,
Run mad for dear damnation, and desire
To feel it light thrilled through with stings of fire.

Above a windier sea,
The glory of Ninety-three
Fills heaven with blood-red and with rose-red beams
That earth beholding grows
Herself one burning rose
Flagrant and fragrant with strange deeds and dreams,
Dreams dyed as love's own flower, and deeds
Stained as with love's own life-blood, that for love's sake bleeds.
And deeper than all deeps of sea and skies
Wherein the shadows are
Called sun and moon and star
That rapt conjecture meets with mounting eyes,
Loud with strange waves and lustrous with new spheres,
Shines, masked at once and manifest of years,
Shakespeare, a heaven of heavenly eyes beholden ;
And forward years as backward years grow golden
With light of deeds and words
And flight of God's fleet birds,
Angels of wrath and love and truth and pity ;
And higher on exiled eyes their natural city
Dawns down the depths of vision, more sublime
Than all truths born of time ;
And eyes that wept above two dear sons dead
Grow saving stars to guard one hopeless head.
Bright round the brows of banished age had shone
In vision flushed with truth
The rosy glory of youth
On streets and woodlands where in days long gone
Sweet love sang light and loud and deep and dear :
And far the trumpets of the dreadful year
Had pealed and wailed in darkness : last arose
The song of children, kindling as a rose
At breath of sunrise, born
Of the red flower of morn
Whose face perfumes deep heaven with odorous light
And thrills all through the wings of souls in flight
Close as the press of children at His knee
Whom if the high priest see,
Dreaming, as homeless on dark earth he trod,
The lips that praise him shall not know for God.

O sovereign spirit, above
All offering but man's love,
All praise and prayer and incense undefiled !
The one thing stronger found
Than towers with iron bound ;
The one thing lovelier than a little child,
And deeper than the seas are deep,
And tenderer than such tears of love as angels weep.

Dante, the seer of all things evil and good,
Beheld two ladies, Beauty
And high life-hallowing Duty,
That strove for sway upon his mind and mood
And held him in alternating accord
Fast bound at feet of either : but our lord,

The seer and singer of righteousness and wrong
Who stands now master of all the keys of song,
Sees both as dewdrops run
Together in the sun,
For him not twain but one thing twice divine ;
Even as his speech and song are bread and wine
For all souls hungering and all hearts athirst
At best of days and worst,
And both one sacrament of Love's great giving
To feed the spirit and sense of all souls living.

The seventh day in the wind's month ten years gone
Since heaven-espousing earth
Gave the Republic birth,
The mightiest soul put mortal raiment on
That came forth singing ever in man's ears
Of all souls with us, and through all these years
Rings yet the lordliest, waxen yet more strong
That on our souls hath shed itself in song,
Poured forth itself like rain
On souls like springing grain
That with its procreant beams and showers were fed
For living wine and sacramental bread ;
Given all itself as air gives life and light,
Utterly, as of right ;
The goodliest gift our age hath given, to be
Ours, while the sun gives glory to the sea.

Our Father and Master and Lord,
Who hast thy song for sword,
For staff thy spirit, and our hearts for throne;
As in past years of wrong,
Take now my subject song,
To no crowned head made humble but thine own ;
That on thy day of worldly birth
Gives thanks for all thou hast given past thanks of all on earth.

TRISTRAM OF LYONESSE.

PRELUDE.

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT.

Love, that is first and last of all things made,
The light that has the living world for shade,
The spirit that for temporal veil has on
The souls of all men woven in unison,
One fiery raiment with all lives inwrought
And lights of sunny and starry deed and thought,
And alway through new act and passion new
Shines the divine same body and beauty through,
The body spiritual of fire and light
That is to worldly noon as noon to night ;
Love, that is flesh upon the spirit of man
And spirit within the flesh whence breath began ;
Love, that keeps all the choir of lives in chime ;
Love, that is blood within the veins of time ;
That wrought the whole world without stroke of hand,
Shaping the breadth of sea, the length of land,
And with the pulse and motion of his breath
Through the great heart of the earth strikes life and death,
The sweet twain chords that make the sweet tune live
Through day and night of things alternative,
Through silence and through sound of stress and strife,
And ebb and flow of dying death and life ;
Love, that sounds loud or light in all men's ears,
Whence all men's eyes take fire from sparks of tears,
That binds on all men's feet or chains or wings ;
Love, that is root and fruit of terrene things ;
Love, that the whole world's waters shall not drown,
The whole world's fiery forces not burn down ;
Love, that what time his own hands guard his head
The whole world's wrath and strength shall not strike dead ;
Love, that if once his own hands make his grave
The whole world's pity and sorrow shall not save ;
Love that for very life shall not be sold,
Nor bought nor bound with iron nor with gold ;
So strong that heaven, could love bid heaven farewell,
Would turn to fruitless and unflowering hell ;
So sweet that hell, to hell could love be given,
Would turn to splendid and sonorous heaven ;
Love that is fire within thee and light above,
And lives by grace of nothing but of love ;
Through many and lovely thoughts and much desire
Led these twain to the life of tears and fire ;
Through many and lovely days and much delight
Led these twain to the lifeless life of night.
Yea, but what then ? albeit all this were thus,
And soul smote soul and left it ruinous,
And love led love as eyeless men lead men,
Through chance by chance to deathward—Ah, what then ?
Hath love not likewise led them further yet,
Out through the years where memories rise and set,
Some large as suns, some moon-like warm and pale,
Some starry-sighted, some through clouds that sail
Seen as red flame through spectral float of fume,
Each with the blush of its own special bloom

On the fair face of its own coloured light,
Distinguishable in all the host of night,
Divisible from all the radiant rest
And separable in splendour? Hath the best
Light of love's all, of all that burn and move,
A better heaven than heaven is? Hath not love
Made for all these their sweet particular air
To shine in, their own beams and names to bear,
Their ways to wander and their wards to keep,
Till story and song and glory and all things sleep?
Hath he not plucked from death of lovers dead
Their musical soft memories, and kept red
The rose of their remembrance in men's eyes,
The sunsets of their stories in his skies,
The blush of their dead blood in lips that speak
Of their dead lives, and in the listener's cheek
That trembles with the kindling pity lit
In gracious hearts for some sweet fever-fit,
A fiery pity enkindled of pure thought
By tales that make their honey out of nought,
The faithless faith that lives without belief
Its light life through, the griefless ghost of grief?
Yea, as warm night refashions the sere blood
In storm-struck petal or in sun-struck bud,
With tender hours and tempering dew to cure
The hunger and thirst of day's distemperature
And ravin of the dry discolouring hours,
Hath he not bid relume their flameless flowers
With summer fire and heat of lamping song,
And bid the short-lived things, long dead, live long,
And thought remake their wan funereal fames,
And the sweet shining signs of women's names
That mark the months out and the weeks anew
He moves in changeless change of seasons through
To fill the days up of his dateless year
Flame from Queen Helen to Queen Guenevere?
For first of all the sphery signs whereby
Love severs light from darkness, and most high,
In the white front of January there glows
The rose-red sign of Helen like a rose:
And gold-eyed as the shore shelterless
Whereon the sharp-breathed sea blows bitterness,
A storm-star that the seafarers of love
Strain their wind-wearied eyes for glimpses of,
Shoots keen through February's grey frost and damp
The lamplike star of Hero for a lamp;
The star that Marlowe sang into our skies
With mouth of gold, and mourning in his eyes;
And in clear March across the rough blue sea
The signal sapphire of Alcyone
Makes bright the blown brows of the wind-foot year;
And shining like a sunbeam-smitten tear
Full ere it fall, the fair next sign in sight
Burns opal-wise with April-coloured light
When air is quick with song and rain and flame,
My birth-month star that in love's heaven hath name
Iseult, a light of blossom and beam and shower,
My singing sign that makes the song-tree flower;
Next like a pale and burning pearl beyond
The rose-white sphere of flower-named Rosamond
Signs the sweet head of Maytime; and for June
Flares like an angered and storm-reddening moon
Her signal sphere, whose Carthaginian pyre
Shadowed her traitor's flying sail with fire;
Next, glittering as the wine-bright jacinth-stone,
A star south-risen that first to music shone,
The keen girl-star of golden Juliet bears
Light northward to the month whose forehead wears
Her name for flower upon it, and his trees
Mix their deep English song with Veronese:
And like an awful sovereign chrysolite
Burning, the supreme fire that blinds the night,
The hot gold head of Venus kissed by Mars,
A sun flower among small sphered flowers of stars,
The light of Cleopatra fills and burns
The hollow of heaven whence ardent August yearns;
And fixed and shining as the sister-shed

Sweet tears for Phaethon disorbed and dead,
The pale bright autumn's amber-coloured sphere,
That through September sees the saddening year
As love sees change through sorrow, hath to name
Francesca's ; and the star that watches flame
The embers of the harvest overgone
Is Thisbe's, slain of love in Babylon,
Set in the golden girdle of sweet signs
A blood-bright ruby ; last save one light shines
An eastern wonder of sphery chrysopras,
The star that made men mad, Angelica's ;
And latest named and lordliest, with a sound
Of swords and harps in heaven that ring it round,
Last love-light and last love-song of the year's,
Gleams like a glorious emerald Guenevere's.
These are the signs wherethrough the year sees move,
Full of the sun, the sun-god which is love,
A fiery body blood-red from the heart
Outward, with fire-white wings made wide apart,
That close not and unclose not, but upright
Steered without wind by their own light and might
Sweep through the flameless fire of air that rings
From heaven to heaven with thunder of wheels and wings
And antiphones of motion-moulded rhyme
Through spaces out of space and timeless time.
So shine above dead chance and conquered change
The spherèd signs and leave without their range
Doubt and desire, and hope with fear for wife,
Pale pains, and pleasures long worn out of life.
Yea, even the shadows of them spiritless,
Through the dim door of sleep that seem to press,
Forms without form, a piteous people and blind
Men and no men, whose lamentable kind
The shadow of death and shadow of life compel
Through semblances of heaven and false-faced hell,
Through dreams of light and dreams of darkness tost
On waves innavigable, are these so lost ?
Shapes that wax pale and shift in swift strange wise,
Void faces with unspeculative eyes,
Dim things that gaze and glare, dead mouths that move,
Featureless heads discrowned of hate and love,
Mockeries and masks of motion and mute breath,
Leavings of life, the superflux of death—
If these things and no more than these things be
Left when man ends or changes, who can see ?
Or who can say with what more subtle sense
Their subtler natures taste in air less dense
A life less thick and palpable than ours,
Warmed with faint fires and sweetened with dead flowers
And measured by low music? how time fares
In that wan time-forgotten world of theirs,
Their pale poor world too deep for sun or star
To live in, where the eyes of Helen are,
And hers who made as God's own eyes to shine
The eyes that met them of the Florentine,
Wherein the godhead thence transfigured lit
All time for all men with the shadow of it ?
Ah, and these too felt on them as God's grace
The pity and glory of this man's breathing face ;
For these too, these my lovers, these my twain,
Saw Dante, saw God visible by pain,
With lips that thundered and with feet that trod
Before men's eyes incognisable God ;
Saw love and wrath and light and night and fire
Live with one life and at one mouth respire,
And in one golden sound their whole soul heard
Sounding, one sweet immitigable word.
They have the night who had like us the day ;
We, whom day binds, shall have the night as they.
We, from the fetters of the light unbound,
Healed of our wound of living, shall sleep sound.
All gifts but one the jealous God may keep
From our soul's longing, one he cannot—sleep.

This, though he grudge all other grace to prayer,
This grace his closed hand cannot choose but spare.
This, though his ear be sealed to all that live,
Be it lightly given or lothly, God must give.
We, as the men whose name on earth is none,
We too shall surely pass out of the sun ;
Out of the sound and eyeless light of things,
Wide as the stretch of life's time-wandering wings,
Wide as the naked world and shadowless,
And long-lived as the world's own weariness.
Us too, when all the fires of time are cold,
The heights shall hide us and the depths shall hold.
Us too, when all the tears of time are dry,
The night shall lighten from her tearless eye.
Blind is the day and eyeless all its light,
But the large unbewildered eye of night
Hath sense and speculation ; and the sheer
Limitless length of lifeless life and clear,
The timeless space wherein the brief worlds move
Clothed with light life and fruitful with light love,
With hopes that threaten, and with fears that cease,
Past fear and hope, hath in it only peace.
Yet of these lives inlaid with hopes and fears,
Spun fine as fire and jewelled thick with tears,
These lives made out of loves that long since were,
Lives wrought as ours of earth and burning air,
Fugitive flame and water of secret springs,
And clothed with joys and sorrows as with wings,
Some yet are good, if aught be good, to save
Some while from washing wreck and wrecking wave.
Was such not theirs, the twain I take, and give
Out of my life to let their dead life live
Some days of mine, and blow my living breath
Between dead lips forgotten even of death ?
So many and many of old have given my twain
Love and life song and honey-parted pain,
Whose root is sweetness and whose fruit is sweet,
So many and with such joy have tracked their feet,
What should I do to follow ? yet I too,
I have the heart to follow, many or few
Be the feet gone before me ; for the way,
Rose-red with remnant roses of the day
Westward, and eastward white with stars that break,
Between the green and foam is fair to take
For any sail the sea-wind steers for me
From morning into morning, sea to sea.

I.

THE SAILING OF THE SWALLOW.

ABOUT the middle music of the spring
Came from the castled shore of Ireland's king
A fair ship stoutly sailing, eastward bound
And south by Wales and all its wonders round
To the loud rocks and ringing reaches home
That take the wild wrath of the Cornish foam,
Past Lyonesse unswallowed of the tides
And high Carlion that now the steep sea hides
To the wind-hollowed heights and gusty bays
Of sheer Tintagel, fair with famous days.
Above the stem a gilded swallow shone,
Wrought with straight wings and eyes of glittering stone
As flying sunward oversea, to bear
Green summer with it through the singing air.
And on the deck between the rowers at dawn,
As the bright sail with brightening wind was drawn,
Sat with full face against the strengthening light
Iseult, more fair than foam or dawn was white.

Her gaze was glad past love's own singing of,
And her face lovely past desire of love.
Past thought and speech her maiden motions were,
And a more golden sunrise was her hair.
The very veil of her bright flesh was made
As of light woven and moonbeam-colored shade
More fine than moonbeams ; white her eyelids shone
As snow sun-stricken that endures the sun,
And through their curled and coloured clouds of deep
Luminous lashes thick as dreams in sleep
Shone as the sea's depth swallowing up the sky's
The springs of unimaginable eyes.
As the wave's subtler emerald is pierced through
With the utmost heaven's inextricable blue,
And both are woven and molten in one sleight
Of amorous color and implicated light
Under the golden guard and gaze of noon,
So glowed their aweless amorous plenilune,
Azure and gold and ardent grey, made strange
With fiery difference and deep interchange
Inexplicable of glories multiform :
Now as the sullen sapphire swells toward storm
Foamless, their bitter beauty grew acold,
And now afire with ardour of fine gold.
Her flower-soft lips were meek and passionate,
For love upon them like a shadow sate
Patient, a foreseen vision of sweet things,
A dream with eyes fast shut and plumeless wings
That knew not what man's love or life should be,
Nor had it sight nor heart to hope or see
What thing should come, but childlike satisfied
Watched out its virgin vigil in soft pride
And unkissed expectation ; and the glad
Clear cheeks and throat and tender temples had
Such maiden heat as if a rose's blood
Beat in the live heart of a lily-bud.
Between the small round breasts a white way led
Heavenward, and from slight foot to slender head
The whole fair body flower-like swayed and shone
Moving, and what her light hand leant upon
Grew blossom-scented ; her warm arms began
To round and ripen for delight of man
That they should clasp and circle : her fresh hands,
Like regent lilies of reflowering lands
Whose vassal firstlings, crown and star and plume,
Bow down to the empire of that sovereign bloom,
Shone sceptreless, and from her face there went
A silent light as of a God content ;
Save when, more swift and keen than love or shame,
Some flash of blood, light as the laugh of flame,
Broke it with sudden beam and shining speech,
As dream by dream shot through her eyes, and each
Outshone the last that lightened, and not one
Showed her such things as should be borne and done,
Though hard against her shone the sunlike face
That in all change and wreck of time and place
Should be the star of her sweet living soul.
Nor had love made it as his written scroll
For evil will and good to read in yet ;
But smooth and mighty, without scar or fret,
Fresh and high-lifted was the helmless brow
As the oak-tree flower that tops the topmost bough,
Ere it drop off before the perfect leaf ;
And nothing save his name he had of grief,
The name his mother, dying as he was born,
Made out of sorrow in very sorrow's scorn,
And set it on him smiling in her sight,
Tristram ; who now, clothed with sweet youth and might,
As a glad witness wore that bitter name,
The second symbol of the world for fame.
Famous and full of fortune was his youth
Ere the beard's bloom had left his cheek unsmooth.
And in his face a lordship of strong joy
And height of heart no chance could curb or cloy
Lightened, and all that warmed them at his eyes
Loved them as larks that kindle as they rise
Toward light they turn to music love the blue strong skies.

So like the morning through the morning moved
Tristram, a light to look on and be loved.
Song sprang between his lips and hands, and shone
Singing, and strengthened and sank down thereon
As a bird settles to the second flight,
Then from beneath his harping hands with might
Leapt, and made way and had its fill and died,
And all whose hearts were fed upon it sighed
Silent, and in them all the fire of tears
Burned as wine drunken not with lips but ears.
And gazing on his fervent hands that made
The might of music all their souls obeyed
With trembling strong subservience of delight,
Full many a maid that had him once in sight
Thought in the secret rapture of her heart
In how dark onset had these hands borne part
How oft, and were so young and sweet of skill;
And those red lips whereon the song burned still,
What words and cries of battle had they flung
Athwart the swing and shriek of swords, so young;
And eyes as glad as summer, what strange youth
Fed them so full of happy heart and truth,
That had seen sway from side to sundering side
The steel flow of that terrible springtide
That the moon rules not, but the fire and light
Of men's hearts mixed in the mid mirth of fight.
Therefore the joy and love of him they had
Made thought more amorous in them and more glad
For his fame's 'sake remembered, and his youth
Gave his fame flowerlike fragrance and soft growth
As of a rose requickening, when he stood
Fair in their eye, a flower of faultless blood.
And that sad queen to whom his life was death,
A rose plucked forth of summer in mid breath,
A star fall'n out of season in mid throe
Of that life's joy that makes the star's life glow,
Made their love sadder toward him and more strong,
And in mid change of time and fight and song
Chance cast him westward on the low sweet strand
Where songs are sung of the old green Irish land,
And the sky loves it, and the sea loves best,
And as a bird is taken to man's breast
The sweet-souled land where sorrow sweetest sings
Is wrapt round with them as with hands and wings
And taken to the sea's heart as a flower.
There in the luck and light of his good hour
Came to the king's court like a noteless man
Tristram, and while some half a season ran
Abode before him harping in his hall,
And taught sweet craft of new things musical
To the dear maiden mouth and innocent hands
That for his sake are famous in all lands.
Yet was not love between them, for their fate
Lay wrapt in its appointed hour at wait,
And had no flower to show yet, and no sting.
But once being vexed with some past wound the king
Bade give him comfort of sweet baths, and then
Should Iseult watch him as his handmaiden,
For his more honour in men's sight, and ease
The hurts he had with holy remedies
Made by her mother's magic in strange hours
Out of live roots and life-compelling flowers.
And finding by the wound's shape in his side
This was the knight by whom their strength had died
And all their might in one man overthrown
Had left their shame in sight of all men shown,
She would have slain him swordless with his sword;
Yet seemed he to her so great and fair a lord
She heaved up hand and smote not; then said he,
Laughing—'What comfort shall this dead man be,
Damsel? what hurt is for my blood to heal?
But set your hand not near the toothed steel
Lest the fang strike it.'—'Yea, the fang,' she said,
'Should it not sting the very serpent dead
That stung my uncle? for his slayer art thou,
And half my mother's heart is bloodless now

Through thee, that mad'st the veins of all her kin
Bleed in his wounds whose veins through thee ran thin.
Yet thought she how their hot chief's violent heart
Had flung the fierce word forth upon their part
Which bade to battle the best knight that stood
On Arthur's, and so dying of his wild mood
Had set upon his conqueror's flesh the seal
Of his mishallowed and anointed steel,
Whereof the venom and enchanted might
Made the sign burn here branded in her sight.
These things she stood recasting, and her soul
Subsiding till its wound of wrath were whole
Grew smooth again, as though still softening stole
Through all its tempered passion ; nor might hate
Keep high the fire against him lit of late ;
But softly from his smiling sight she passed.
And peace thereafter made between them fast
Made peace between two kingdoms, when he went
Home with hands reconciled and heart content,
To bring fair truce 'twixt Cornwall's wild bright strand
And the long wrangling wars of that loud land.
And when full peace was struck betwixt them twain
Forth must he fare by those green straits again,
And bring back Iseult for a plighted bride
And set to reign at Mark his uncle's side.
So now with feast made and all triumphs done
They sailed between the moonfall and the sun
Under the spent stars eastward; but the queen
Out of wise heart and subtle love had seen
Such things as might be, dark as in a glass,
And lest some doom of these should come to pass
Bethought her with her secret soul alone
To work some charm for marriage unison
And strike the heart of Iseult to her lord
With power compulsive more than stroke of sword.
Therefore with marvellous herbs and spells she wrought
To win the very wonder of her thought,
And brewed it with her secret hands and blest
And drew and gave out of her secret breast
To one her chosen and Iseult's handmaiden,
Brangwain, and bade her hide from sight of men
This marvel covered in a golden cup,
So covering in her heart the counsel up
As in the gold the wondrous wine lay close :
And when the last shout with the last cup rose
About the bride and bridegroom bound to bed.
Then should this one word of her will be said
To her new-married maiden child, that she
Should drink with Mark this draught in unity.
And no lip touch it for her sake but theirs :
For with long love and consecrating prayers
The wine was hallowed for their mouths to pledge ;
And if a drop fell from the beaker's edge
That drop should Iseult hold as dear as blood
Shed from her mother's heart to do her good.
And having drunk they twain should be one heart
Who were one flesh till fleshly death should part—
Death, who parts all. So Brangwain swore, and kept
The hid thing by her while she waked or slept.
And now they sat to see the sun again
Whose light of eye had looked on no such twain
Since Galahault in the rose-time of the year
Brought Launcelot first to sight of Guenevere.
And Tristram caught her changing eyes and said :
' As this day raises daylight from the dead
Might not this face the light of a dead man?
And Iseult, gazing where the sea was wan
Out of the sun's way, said : ' I pray you not
Praise me, but tell me there in Camelot,
Saving the queen, who hath most name of fair?
I would I were a man and dwelling there,
That I might win me better praise than yours,
Even such as you have ; for your praise endures,
That with great deeds ye wring from mouths of men,
But ours—for shame, where is it? Tell me then,
Since woman may not wear a better here,
Who of this praise hath most save Guenevere? '

And Tristram, lightening with a laugh held in—
'Surely a little praise is this to win,
A poor praise and a little! but of these
Hapless, whom love serves only with bowed knees.
Of such poor women fairer face hath none
That lifts her eyes alive against the sun
Than Arthur's sister, whom the north seas call
Mistress of isles; so yet majestical
Above the crowns on younger heads she moves,
Outlightening with her eyes our late-born loves.'
'Ah,' said Iseult, 'is she more tall than I?
Look, I am tall;' and struck the mast hard by,
With utmost upward reach of her bright hand;
'And look, fair lord, now, when I rise and stand,
How high with feet uplifted I can touch
Standing straight up; could this queen do thus much?
Nay, over tall she must be then, like me;
Less fair than lesser women. May this be,
That still she stands the second stateliest there,
So more than many so much younger fair,
She, born when yet the king your lord was not,
And has the third knight after Launcelot
And after you to serve her? nay, sir, then
God made her for a godlike sign to men.'
'Ay,' Tristram answered, 'for a sign, a sign—
Would God it were not! for no planets shine
With half such fearful forecast of men's fate
As a fair face so more unfortunate.'
Then with a smile that lit not on her brows
But moved upon her red mouth tremulous
Light as a sea-bird's motion oversea,
'Yea,' quoth Iseult, 'the happier hap for me,
With no such face to bring men no such fate.
Yet her might all we women born too late
Praise for good hap, who so enskied above
Not more in age excels us than man's love.'
There came a glooming light on Tristram's face
Answering: 'God keep you better in his grace
Than to sit down beside her in men's sight.
For if men be not blind whom God gives light
And lie not in whose lips he bids truth live,
Great grief shall she be given, and greater give,
For Merlin witnessed of her years ago
That she should work woe and should suffer woe
Beyond the race of women: and in truth
Her face, a spell that knows nor age nor youth,
Like youth being soft, and subtler-eyed than age,
With lips that mock the doom her eyes presage,
Hath on it such a light of cloud and fire,
With charm and change of keen or dim desire,
And over all a fearless look of fear
Hung like a veil across its changing cheer,
Made up of fierce foreknowledge and sharp scorn,
That it were better she had not been born.
For not love's self can help a face which hath
Such insubmissive anguish of wan wrath,
Blind prescience and self-contemptuous hate
Of her own soul and heavy-footed fate,
Writ broad upon its beauty: none the less
Its fire of bright and burning bitterness
Takes with as quick a flame the sense of men
As any sunbeam, nor is quenched again
With any drop of dewfall; yea, I think
No herb of force or blood-compelling drink
Would heal a heart that ever it made hot.
Ay, and men too that greatly love her not,
Seeing the great love of her and Lamoracke,
Make no great marvel, nor look strangely back
When with his gaze about her she goes by
Pale as a breathless and star-quickening sky
Between moonrise and sunset, and moves out
Clothed with the passion of his eyes about
As night with all her stars, yet night is black;
And she, clothed warm with love of Lamoracke,
Girt with his worship as with girdling gold,
Seems all at heart anhungered and acold,
Seems sad at heart and loveless of the light,
As night, star-clothed or naked, is but night.'
And with her sweet eyes sunken, and the mirth
Dead in their look as earth lies dead in earth
That reigned on earth and triumphed, Iseult said:
'Is it her shame of something done and dead
Or fear of something to be born and done
That so in her soul's eye puts out the sun?'

And Tristram answered: 'Surely, as I think,
This gives her soul such bitterness to drink,
The sin born blind, the sightless sin unknown,
Wrought when the summer in her blood was blown,
But scarce aflower, and spring first flushed her will
With bloom of dreams no fruitage should fulfil,
When out of vision and desire was wrought
The sudden sin that from the living thought
Leaps a live deed and dies not: then there came
On that blind sin swift eyesight like a flame
Touching the dark to death, and made her mad
With helpless knowledge that too late forbade
What was before the bidding; and she knew
How sore a life dead love should lead her through
To what sure end how fearful; and though yet
Nor with her blood nor tears her way be wet
And she look bravely with set face on fate,
Yet she knows well the serpent hour at wait
Somewhere to sting and spare not; ay, and he,
Arthur'——
'The king, quoth Iseult suddenly,
'Doth the king too live so in sight of fear?
They say sin touches not a man so near
As shame a woman; yet he too should be
Part of the penance, being more deep than she
Set in the sin.'
'Nay,' Tristram said, 'for thus
It fell by wicked hap and hazardous,
That wittingly he sinned no more than youth
May sin and be assoiled of God and truth,
Repenting; since in his first year of reign
As he stood splendid with his foemen slain
And light of new-blown battles, flushed and hot
With hope and life, came greeting from King Lot
Out of his wind-worn islands oversea,
And homage to my king and fealty
Of those north seas wherein the strange shapes swim,
As from his man; and Arthur greeted him
As his good lord and courteously, and bade
To his high feast; who coming with him had
This Queen Morgause of Orkney, his fair wife,
In the green middle Maytime of her life,
And scarce in April was our king's as then,
And goodliest was he of all flowering men,
And of what graft as yet himself knew not;
But cold as rains in autumn was King Lot
And grey-grown out of season: so there sprang
Swift love between them, and all spring through sang
Light in their joyous hearing; for none knew
The bitter bond of blood between them two.
Twain fathers but one mother, till too late
The sacred mouth of Merlin set forth fate
And brake the secret seal on Arthur's birth,
And showed his ruin and his rule on earth
Inextricable, and light on lives to be.
For surely, though time slay us, yet shall we
Have such high name and lordship of good days
As shall sustain us living, and men's praise
Shall burn a beacon lit above us dead.
And of the king how shall not this be said
When any of us from any mouth has praise,
That such were men in only this king's days,
In Arthur's? yea, come shine or shade, no less
His name shall be one name with knightliness,
His fame one light with sunlight. Yet in sooth
His age shall bear the burdens of his youth
And bleed from his own bloodshed; for indeed
Blind to him blind his sister brought forth seed,
And of the child between them shall be born
Destruction: so shall God not suffer scorn,
Nor in men's souls and lives his law lie dead.'
And as one moved and marvelling Iseult said:
'Great pity it is and strange it seems to me
God could not do them so much right as we,
Who slay not men for witless evil done;
And these the noblest under God's glad sun
For sin they knew not he that knew shall slay,
And smite blind men for stumbling in fair day.
What good is it to God that such should die?
Shall the sun's light grow sunnier in the sky
Because their light of spirit is clean put out?'
And sighing, she looked from wave to cloud about,
And even with that the full-grown feet of day
Sprang upright on the quivering water-way,
And his face burned against her meeting face

Most like a lover's filled with great love's grace
Whose glance takes fire and gives ; the quick sea shone
And shivered like spread wings of angels blown
By the sun's breath before him ; and a low
Sweet gale shook all the foam-flowers of thin snow
As into rain-fall of sea-roses shed
Leaf by wild leaf on that green garden-bed
Which tempests till and sea-winds turn and plough :
For rosy and fiery round the running prow
Fluttered the flakes and feathers of the spray,
And bloomed like blossoms cast by God away
To waste on the ardent water ; swift the moon
Withered to westward as a face in swoon
Death-stricken by glad tidings : and the height
Throbbed and the centre quivered with delight
And the depth quailed with passion as of love,
Till like the heart of some new-mated dove
Air, light, and wave seemed full of burning rest,
With motion as of one God's beating breast.
And her heart sprang in Iseult, and she drew
With all her spirit and life the sunrise through,
And through her lips the keen triumphant air
Sea-scented, sweeter than land-roses were,
And through her eyes the whole rejoicing east
Sun-satisfied, and all the heaven at feast
Spread for the morning ; and the imperious mirth
Of wind and light that moved upon the earth,
Making the spring, and all the fruitful might
And strong regeneration of delight
That swells the seedling leaf and sapling man,
Since the first life in the first world began
To burn and burgeon through void limbs and veins,
And the first love with sharp sweet procreant pains
To pierce and bring forth roses ; yea, she felt
Through her own soul the sovereign morning melt,
And all the sacred passion of the sun ;
And as the young clouds flamed and were undone
About him coming, touched and burnt away
In rosy ruin and yellow spoil of day,
The sweet veil of her body and corporal sense
Felt the dawn also cleave it, and incense
With light from inward and with effluent heat
The kindling soul through fleshly hands and feet.
And as the august great blossom of the dawn
Burst, and the full sun scarce from sea with drawn
Seemed on the fiery water a flower afloat,
So as a fire the mighty morning smote
Throughout her, and incensed with the influent hour
Her whole soul's great mystical red flower
Burst, and the bud of her sweet spirit broke
Rose-fashion, and the strong spring at a stroke
Thrilled, and was cloven, and from the full sheath came
The whole rose of the woman red as flame :
And all her Mayday blood as from a swoon
Flushed, and May rose up in her and was June.
So for a space her heart as heavenward burned :
Then with half summer in her eyes she turned,
And on her lips were April yet, and smiled,
As though the spirit and sense unreconciled
Shrank laughing back, and would not ere its hour
Let life put forth the irrevocable flower.
And the soft speech between them grew again
With questionings and records of what men
Rose mightiest, and what names for love or fight
Shone starriest overhead of queen or knight.
There Tristram spake of many a noble thing,
High feast and storm of tournay round the king,
Strange quest by perilous lands of marsh and brake,
And circling woods branch-knotted like a snake,
And places pale with sins that they had seen
Where was no life of red fruit or of green
But all was as a dead face wan and dun ;
And bowers of evil builders whence the sun
Turns silent, and the moon holds hardly light
Above them through the sick and star-crossed night ;
And of their hands through whom such holds lay waste,

And all their strengths dishevelled and defaced
Fell ruinous, and were not from north to south:
And of the might of Merlin's ancient mouth,
The son of no man's loins, begot by doom
In speechless sleep out of a spotless womb;
For sleeping among graves where none had rest
And ominous houses of dead bones unblest
Among the grey grass rough as old rent hair
And wicked herbage whitening like despair
And blown upon with blasts of dolorous breath
From gaunt rare gaps and hollow doors of death,
A maid unspotted, senseless of the spell,
Felt not about her breathe some thing of hell
Whose child and hers was Merlin; and to him
Great light from God gave sight of all things dim
And wisdom of all wondrous things, to say
What root should bear, what fruit of night or day,
And sovereign speech and counsel higher than man;
Wherefore his youth like age was wise and wan,
And his age sorrowful and fain to sleep;
Yet should sleep never, neither laugh nor weep,
Till in some depth of deep sweet land or sea
The heavenly hands of holier Nimue,
That was the nurse of Launcelot, and most sweet
Of all that move with magical soft feet
Among us, being of lovelier blood and breath,
Should shut him in with sleep as kind as death:
For she could pass between the quick and dead:
And of her love toward Pelleas, for whose head
Love-wounded and world-wearied she had won
A place beyond all pain in Avalon;
And of the fire that wasted afterward
The loveless eyes and bosom of Ettarde,
In whose false love his faultless heart had burned;
And now being rapt from her, her lost heart yearned
To seek him, and passed hungering out of life:
And after all the thunder-hours of strife
That roared between King Claudas and King Ban
How Nimue's mighty nursling waxed to man,
And how from his first field such grace he got
That all men's hearts bowed down to Launcelot,
And how the high prince Galahault held him dear
And led him even to love of Guenevere
And to that kiss which made break forth as fire
The laugh that was the flower of his desire,
The laugh that lightened at her lips for bliss
To win from love so great a lover's kiss:
And of the toil of Balen all his days
To reap but thorns for fruit and tears for praise,
Whose hap was evil as his heart was good,
And all his works and ways by wold and wood
Led through much pain to one last labouring day
When blood for tears washed grief with life away:
And of the kin of Arthur, and their might;
The misborn head of Mordred, sad as night,
With cold waste cheeks and eyes as keen as pain,
And the close angry lips of Agravaine;
And gracious Gawain, scattering words as flowers,
The kindliest head of worldly paramours;
And the fair hand of Gareth, found in fight
Strong as a sea-beast's tushes and as white;
And of the king's self, glorious yet and glad
For all the toil and doubt of doom he had,
Clothed with men's loves and full of kingly days.
Then Iseult said: 'Let each knight have his praise
And each good man good witness of his worth;
But when men laud the second name on earth,
Whom would they praise to have no worldly peer
Save him whose love makes glorious Guenevere?'
'Nay,' Tristram said, 'such man as he is none.'
'What,' said she, 'there is none such under sun
Of all the large earth's living? yet I deemed
Men spake of one—but maybe men that dreamed,

Fools and tongue-stricken, witless, babbler's breed—
That for all high things was his peer indeed
Save this one highest, to be so loved and love.'
And Tristram said: 'Little wit had these thereof;
For there is none such in the world as this.'
'Ay, upon land,' quoth Iseult, 'none such is,
I doubt not, nor where fighting folk may be;
But were there none such between sky and sea,
The world's whole worth were poorer than I wist.'
And Tristram took her flower-white hand and kissed,
Laughing; and through his fair face as in shame
The light blood lightened. 'Hear they no such name?'
She said; and he, 'If there be such a word,
I wot the queen's poor harper hath not heard.'
Then, as the fuller-feathered hours grew long,
He holp to speed their warm slow feet with song.

Love, is it morning risen or night deceased
That makes the mirth of this triumphant east?
Is it bliss given or bitterness put by
That makes most glad men's hearts at love's high feast?
Grief smiles, joy weeps, that day should live and die.

'Is it with soul's thirst or with body's drought
That summer yearns out sunward to the south,
With all the flowers that when thy birth drew nigh
Were molten in one rose to make thy mouth?
O love, what care though day should live and die?

Is the sun glad of all the love on earth,
The spirit and sense and work of things and worth?
Is the moon sad because the month must fly
And bring her death that can but bring back birth?
For all these things as day must live and die.

'Love, is it day that makes thee thy delight
Or thou that seest day made out of thy light?
Love, as the sun and sea are thou and I,
Sea without sun dark, sun without sea bright;
The sun is one though day should live and die.

'O which is elder night or light, who knows?
And life or love, which first of these twain grows?
For life is born of love to wail and cry,
And love is born of life to heal his woes,
And light of night, that day should live and die.

'O sun of heaven above the worldly sea,
O very love, what light is this of thee!
My sea of soul is deep as thou art high,
But all thy light is shed through all of me,
As love's through love, while day shall live and die.

'Nay,' said Iseult, 'your song is hard to read.'
'Ay?' said he: 'or too light a song to heed,
Too slight to follow, it may be? Who shall sing
Of love but as a churl before a king
If by love's worth men rate his worthiness?
Yet as the poor churl's worth to sing is less,
Surely the more shall be the great king's grace
To show for churlish love a kindlier face.'
'No churl,' she said, 'but one in sooth-sayer's wise
Who tells but truths that help no more than lies.
I have heard men sing of love a simpler way
Than these wrought riddles made of night and day,
Like jewelled reins whereon the rhyme-bells hang.'
And Tristram smiled and changed his song and sang.

'The breath between my lips of lips not mine,
Like spirit in sense that makes pure sense divine,
Is as life in them from the living sky
That entering fills my heart with blood of thine
And thee with me, while day shall live and die

'Thy soul is shed into me with thy breath,
And in my heart each heartbeat of thee saith
How in thy life the offsprings of me lie,
Even one life to be gathered of one death
In me and thee, though day may live and die.

'Ah, who knows now if in my veins it be
My blood that feels life sweet, or blood of thee,
And this thine eyesight kindled in mine eye
That shows me in thy flesh the soul of me,
For thine made mine, while day may live and die?

'Ah, who knows yet if one be twain or one,
And sunlight separable again from sun,
And I from thee with all my lifesprings dry,
And thou from me with all thine heartbeats done,
Dead separate souls while day shall live and die?

'I see my soul within thine eyes, and hear
My spirit in all thy pulses thrill with fear,
And in my lips the passion of thee sigh,
And music of me made in mine own ear;
Am I not thou while day shall live and die?

'Art thou not I as I thy love am thou?
So let all things pass from us; we are now,
For all that was and will be, who knows why?
And all that is and is not, who knows how?
Who knows? God knows why day should live and die.'

And Iseult mused and spake no word, but sought

Through all the hushed ways of her tongueless thought
What face or covered likeness of a face
In what veiled hour or dream-determined place
She seeing might take for love's face, and believe
This was the spirit to whom all spirits cleave.
For that sweet wonder of the twain made one
And each one twain, incorporate sun with sun,
Star with star molten, soul imbued,
And all the soul's works, all their multitude,
Made one thought and one vision and one song,
Love—this thing, this, laid hand on her so strong
She could not choose but yearn till she should see.
So went she musing down her thoughts ; but he,
Sweet-hearted as a bird that takes the sun
With clear strong eyes, and feels the glad god run
Bright through his blood and wide rejoicing wings,
And opens all himself to heaven and sings,
Made her mind light and full of noble mirth
With words and songs the gladdest grown on earth,
Till she was blithe and high of heart as he.
So swam the Swallow through the springing sea.
And while they sat at speech as at a feast,
Came a light wind fast hardening forth of the east
And blackening till its might had marred the skies :
And the sea thrilled as with heart-sundering sighs
One after one drawn, with each breath it drew,
And the green hardened into iron blue,
And the soft light went out of all its face.
Then Tristram girt him for an oarsman's place
And took his oar and smote, and toiled with might
In the east wind's full face and the strong sea's spite
Labouring ; and all the rowers rowed hard, but he
More mightily than any wearier three,
And Iseult watched him rowing with sinless eyes
That loved him but in holy girlish wise
For noble joy in his fair manliness
And trust and tender wonder ; none the less
She thought if God had given her grace to be
Man, and make war on danger of earth and sea,
Even such a man she would be ; for his stroke
Was mightiest as the mightier water broke,
And in sheer measure like strong music drave
Clean through the wet weight of the wallowing wave,
And as a tune before a great king played
For triumph was the tune their strong strokes made,
And speed the ship through with smooth strife of oars
Over the mid sea's grey foam-paven floors,
For all the loud breach of the waves at will.
So for an hour they fought the storm out still,
And the shorn foam spun from the blades, and high
The keel sprang from the wave-ridge, and the sky
Glared at them for a breath's space through the rain ;
Then the bows with a sharp shock plunged again
Down, and the sea clashed on them, and so rose
The bright stem like one panting from swift blows,
And as a swimmer's joyous beaten head
Rears itself laughing, so in that sharp stead
The light ship lifted her long quivering bows
As might the man his buffeted strong brows
Out of the wave-breach ; for with one stroke yet
Went all men's oars together, strongly set
As to loud music, and with hearts uplift
They smote their strong way through the drench and drift.
Till the keen hour had chafed itself to death
And the east wind fell fitfully, breath by breath,
Tired ; and across the thin and slackening rain
Sprang the face southward of the sun again.
Then all they rested and were eased at heart ;
And Iseult rose up where she sat apart,
And with her sweet soul deepening her deep eyes
Cast the furs from her and subtle embroideries

That wrapped her from the storming rain and spray,
And shining like all April in one day,
Hair, face, and throat dashed with the straying showers,
She stood the first of all the whole world's flowers,
And laughed on Tristram with her eyes, and said,
'I too have heart then, I was not afraid.'
And answering some light courteous word of grace
He saw her clear face lighten on his face
Unwittingly, with unenamoured eyes,
For the last time. A live man in such wise
Looks in the deadly face of his fixed hour
And laughs with lips wherein he hath no power
To keep the life yet some five minutes' space.
So Tristram looked on Iseult face to face
And knew not, and she knew not. The last time—
The last that should be told in any rhyme
Heard anywhere on mouths of singing men
That ever should sing praise of them again ;
The last hour of their hurtless hearts at rest,
The last that peace should touch them breast to breast,
The last that sorrow far from them should sit,
This last was with them, and they knew not it.
For Tristram being athirst with toil now spake,
Saying, 'Iseult, for all dear love's labour's sake
Give me to drink, and give me for a pledge
The touch of four lips on the beaker's edge.'
And Iseult sought and would not wake Brangwain
Who slept as one half dead with fear and pain,
Being tender-natured ; so with hushed light feet
Went Iseult round her, with soft looks and sweet
Pitying her pain ; so sweet a spirited thing
She was, and daughter of a kindly king.
And spying what strange bright secret charge was kept
Fast in that maid's white bosom while she slept,
She sought and drew the gold cup forth and smiled
Marvelling, with such light wonder as a child
That hears of glad sad life in magic lands ;
And bare it back to Tristram with pure hands
Holding the love-draught that should be for flame
To burn out of them fear and faith and shame,
And lighten all their life up in men's sight,
And make them sad for ever. Then the knight
Bowed toward her and craved whence had she this strange thing
That might be spoil of some dim Asian king,
By starlight stolen from some waste place of sands,
And a maid bore it here in harmless hands.
And Iseult, laughing—'Other lords that be
Feast, and their men feast after them ; but we,
Our men must keep the best wine back to feast
Till they be full and we of all men least
Feed after them and fain to fare so well :
So with mine handmaid and your squire it fell
That hid this bright thing from us in a wile : '
And with light lips yet full of their swift smile
And hands that wist not though they dug a grave,
Undid the hasps of gold, and drank, and gave,
And he drank after, a deep glad kingly draught :
And all their life changed in them, for they quaffed
Death ; if it be death so to drink, and fare
As men who change and are what these twain were.
And shuddering with eyes full of fear and fire
And heart-strung with a serpentine desire
He turned and saw the terror in her eyes
That yearned upon him shining in such wise
As a star midway in the midnight fixed.
Their Galahault was the cup, and she that mixed ;
Nor other hand there needed, nor sweet speech
To lure their lips together ; each on each

Hung with strange eyes and hovered as a bird [word;
Wounded, and each mouth trembled for a
Their heads neared, and their hands were drawn in one,
And they saw dark, though still the unsunken sun
Far through fine rain shot fire into the south;
And their four lips became one burning mouth.

II.

THE QUEEN'S PLEASANCE.

Out of the night arose the second day,
And saw the ship's bows break the shoreward spray.
As the sun's boat of gold and fire began
To sail the sea of heaven unsailed of man,
And the soft waves of sacred air to break
Round the prow launched into the morning's lake,
They saw the sign of their sea-travel done.
Ah, was not something seen of yester-sun,
When the sweet light that lightened all the skies
Saw nothing fairer than one maiden's eyes,
That whatsoever in all time's years may be
To-day's sun nor to-morrow's sun shall see?
Not while she lives, not when she comes to die
Shall she look sunward with that sinless eye.
Yet fairer now than song may show them stand
Tristram and Iseult, hand in amorous hand,
Soul-satisfied, their eyes made great and bright
With all the love of all the livelong night;
With all its hours yet singing in their ears
No mortal music made of thoughts and tears,
But such a song, past conscience of man's thought,
As hearing he grows god and knows it not.
Nought else they saw nor heard but what the night
Had left for seal upon their sense and sight,
Sound of past pulses beating, fire of amorous light.
Enough, and overmuch, and never yet
Enough, though love still hungering feed and fret,
To fill the cup of night which dawn must overset.
For still their eyes were dimmer than with tears
And dizzier from diviner sounds their ears
Than though from choral thunders of the quiring spheres.
They heard not how the landward waters rang,
Nor saw where high into the morning sprang,
Riven from the shore and bastioned with the sea,
Toward summits where the north wind's nest might be,
A wave-walled palace with its eastern gate
Full of the sunrise now and wide at wait,
And on the mighty-moulded stairs that clomb
Sheer from the fierce lip of the lapping foam
The knights of Mark that stood before the wall.
So with loud joy and storm of festival
They brought the bride in up the towery way
That rose against the rising front of day,
Stair based on stair, between the rocks unhewn,
To those strange halls wherethrough the tidal tune
Rang loud or lower from soft or strengthening sea,
Tower shouldering tower, to windward and to lee,
With change of floors and stories, flight on flight,
That clomb and curled up to the crowning height
Whence men might see wide east and west in one
And on one sea waned moon and mounting sun.
And severed from the sea-rock's base, where stand
Some worn walls yet, they saw the broken strand,
The beachless cliff that in the sheer sea dips,
The sleepless shore inexorable to ships,

And the straight causeway's spare gaunt spine between
The sea-spanned walls and naked mainland's green.
On the mid stairs, between the light and dark,
Before the main tower's portal stood King Mark,
Crowned: and his face was as the face of one
Long time athirst and hungering for the sun
In barren thrall of bitter bonds, who now
Thinks here to feel its blessing on his brow.
A swart lean man, but kinglike still of guise,
With black streaked beard and cold unquiet eyes,
Close-mouthed, gaunt-cheeked, wan as a morning moon,
Though hardly time on his worn hair had strewn
The thin first ashes from a sparing hand:
Yet little fire there burnt upon the brand,
And way-worn seemed he with life's way-faring.
So between shade and sunlight stood the king,
And his face changed nor yearned not toward his bride;
But fixed between mild hope and patient pride,
Abode what gift of rare or lesser worth
This day might bring to all his days on earth.
But at the glory of her when she came
His heart endured not: very fear and shame
Smote him, to take her by the hand and kiss,
Till both were molten in the burning bliss,
And with a thin flame flushing his cold face
He led her silent to the bridal place.
There were they wed and hallowed of the priest;
And all the loud time of the marriage feast
One thought within three hearts was as a fire,
Where craft and faith took counsel with desire.
For when the feast had made a glorious end
They gave the new queen for her maids to tend
At dawn of bride-night and thereafter bring
With marriage music to the bridegroom king.
Then by device of craft between them laid
To him went Brangwain delicately, and prayed
That this thing even for love's sake might not be,
But without sound or light or eye to see
She might come in to bride-bed: and he laughed,
As one that wist not well of wise love's craft,
And bade all bridal things be as she would
But of his gentleness he gat not good;
For clothed and covered with the nuptial dark
Soft like a bride came Brangwain to King Mark,
And to the queen came Tristram; and the night
Fled, and ere danger of detective light
From the king sleeping Brangwain slid away,
And where had lain her handmaid Iseult lay.
And the king waking saw beside his head
That face yet passion-coloured, amourous red
From lips not his, and all that strange hair shed
Across the tissued pillows, fold on fold,
Innumerable, incomparable, all gold,
To fire men's eyes with wonder, and with love
Men's hearts; so shone its flowering crown above
The brows enwound with that imperial wreath,
And framed with fragrant radiance round the face beneath.
And the king marvelled, seeing with sudden start
Her very glory, and said out of his heart;
'What have I done of good for God to bless
That all this he should give me, tress on tress,
All this great wealth and wondrous? Was it this
That in mine arms I had all night to kiss,
And mix with me this beauty? this that seems
More fair than heaven doth in some tired saint's dreams,
Being part of that same heaven? yea, more, for he,
Though loved of God so, yet but seems to see,
But to me sinful such great grace is given
That in mine hands I hold this part of heaven
Not to mine eyes lent merely. Doth God make
Such things so godlike for man's mortal sake?
Have I not sinned, that in this fleshly life
Have made of her a mere man's very wife?'
So the king mused and murmured; and she heard
The faint sound trembling of each breathless word
And laughed into the covering of her hair.
And many a day for many a month as fair
Slid over them like music; and as bright
Burned with love's offerings many a secret night.
And many a dawn to many a fiery noon
Blew prelude, when the horn's heart-kindling tune
Lit the live woods with sovereign sound of mirth

Before the mightiest huntsman hailed on earth
Lord of its lordliest pleasure, where he rode
Hard by her rein whose peerless presence glowed
Not as that white queen's of the virgin hunt
Once, whose crown-crescent braves the night-wind's brunt,
But with the sun for frontlet of a queenlier front.
For where the flashing of her face was turned
As lightning was the fiery light that burned
From eyes and brows enkindled more with speed
And rapture of the rushing of her steed
Than once with only beauty ; and her mouth
Was as a rose athirst that pants for drouth
Even while it laughs for pleasure of desire,
And all her heart was as a leaping fire.
Yet once more joy they took of woodland ways
Than came of all those flushed and fiery days
When the loud air was mad with life and sound,
Through many a dense green mile, of horn and hound
Before the king's hunt going along the wind,
And ere the timely leaves were changed or thinned,
Even in mid maze of summer. For the knight
Forth was once ridden toward some frontier fight
Against the lewd folk of the Christless lands
That warred with wild and intermittent hands
Against the king's north border ; and there came
A knight unchristened yet of unknown name,
Swart Palamede, upon a secret quest,
To high Tintagel, and abode as guest
In likeness of a minstrel with a king.
Nor was there man could sound so sweet a string,
Save Tristram only, of all held best on earth.
And one loud eve, being full of wine and mirth,
Ere sunset left the walls and waters dark,
To that strange minstrel strongly swore King Mark,
By all that makes a knight's faith firm and strong,
That he for guerdon of his harp and song
Might crave and have his liking. Straight there came
Up the swart cheek a flash of swarthier flame,
And the deep eyes fulfilled of glittering night
Laughed out in lightnings of triumphant light
As the grim harper spake : 'O king, I crave
No gift of man that king may give to slave,
But this thy crowned queen only, this thy wife,
Whom yet unseen I loved, and set my life
On this poor chance to compass, even as here,
Being fairer famed than all save Guenevere.'
Then as the noise of seaward storm that mocks
With roaring laughter from reverberate rocks
The cry from ships near shipwreck, harsh and high
Rose all the wrath and wonder in one cry
Through all the long roof's hollow depth and length
That hearts of strong men kindled in their strength
May speak in laughter lion-like, and cease,
Being wearied : only two men held their peace
And each glared hard on other ; but King Mark
Spake first of these : " Man, though thy craft be dark
And thy mind evil that begat this thing,
Yet stands the word once plighted of a king
Fast : and albeit less evil it were for me
To give my life up than my wife, or be
A landless man crowned only with a curse,
Yet this in God's and all men's sight were worse,
To live soul-shamed, a man of broken troth,
Abhorred of men as I abhor mine oath
Which yet I may forswear not.' And he bowed
His head and wept : and all men wept aloud,
Save one, that heard him weeping ; but the queen
Wept not : and statelier yet than eyes had seen
That ever looked upon her queenly state
She rose, and in her eyes her heart was great
And full of wrath seen manifest and scorn
More strong than anguish to go thence forlorn
Of all men's comfort and her natural right.
And they went forth into the dawn of night.
Long by wild ways and clouded light they rode,
Silent ; and fear less keen at heart abode
With Iseult than with Palamede : for awe
Constrained him, and the might of love's high law,

That can make lewd men royal ; and his heart
Yearned on her, if perchance with amorous art
And soothfast skill of very love he might
For courtesy find favor in her sight
And comfort of her mercies : for he wist
More grace might come of that sweet mouth unkissed
Than joy for violence done it, that should make
His name abhorred for shame's disloyal sake.
And in the stormy starlight clouds were thinned
And thickened by short gusts of changing wind
That panted like a sick man's fitful breath :
And like a moan of lions hurt to death
Came the sea's hollow noise along the night.
But ere its gloom from aught but foam had light
They halted, being aweary : and the knight
As reverently forbore her where she lay
As one that watched his sister's sleep till day.
Nor durst he kiss or touch her hand or hair
For love and shamefast pity, seeing how fair
She slept, and fenceless from the fitful air.
And shame at heart stung nigh to death desire,
But grief at heart burned in him like a fire
For hers and his own sorrowing sake, that had
Such grace for guerdon as makes glad men sad,
To have their will and want it. And the day
Sprang : and afar along the wild waste way
They heard the pulse and press of hurrying horse-hoofs play :
And like the rushing of a ravenous flame
Whose wings make tempest of the darkness, came
Upon them headlong as in thunder borne
Forth of the darkness of the labouring morn
Tristram : and up forthright upon his steed
Leapt, as one blithe of battle, Palamede,
And mightily with shock of horse and man
They lashed together : and fair that fight began
As fair came up that sunrise : to and fro,
With knees nigh staggered and stout heads bent low
From each quick shock of spears on either side,
Reeled the strong steeds heavily, haggard-eyed
And heartened high with passion of their pride
As sheer the stout spears shocked again, and flew
Sharp-splintering : then, his sword as each knight drew,
They flashed and foined full royally, so long
That but to see so fair a strife and strong
A man might well have given out of his life
One year's void space forlorn of love or strife.
As when a bright north-easter, great of heart,
Scattering the strengths of squadrons, hurls apart
Ship from ship labouring violently, in such toil
As earns but ruin—with even so strong recoil
Back were the steeds hurled from the spear shock, fain
And foiled of triumph : then with tightened rein
And stroke of spur, inveterate, either knight
Broe in again upon his foe with might,
Heart-hungry for the hot-mouthed feast of fight
And all athirst of mastery : but full soon
The jarring notes of that tempestuous tune
Fell, and its mighty music made of hands
Contending, clamorous through the loud waste lands,
Broke at once off ; and shattered from his steed
Fell, as a mainmast ruining, Palamede,
Stunned : and those lovers left him where he lay,
And lightly through green lawns they rode away.
There was a bower beyond man's eye more fair
Than ever summer dews and sunniest air
Fed full with rest and radiance till the boughs
Had wrought a roof as for a holier house
Than aught save love might breathe in ; fairer far
Than keeps the sweet light back of moon and star
From high kings' chambers : there might love and sleep
Divide for joy the darkling hours, and keep
With amorous alternation of sweet strife
The soft and secret ways of death and life
Made smooth for pleasure's feet to rest and run
Even from the moondawn to the kindling sun,
Made bright for passion's feet to run and rest

Between the midnight's and the morning's breast,
Where hardly though her happy head lie down
It may forget the hour that wove its crown ;
Where hardly though her joyous limbs he laid
That may forget the mirth that midnight made.
And thither, ere sweet night had slain sweet day,
Iseult and Tristram took their wandering way,
And rested, and refreshed their hearts with cheer
In hunters' fashion of the woods ; and here
More sweet it seemed, while this might be, to dwell
And take of all world's weariness farewell
Than reign of all world's lordship queen and king.
Nor here would time for three moons' changes bring
Sorrow nor thought of sorrow ; but sweet earth
Fostered them like her babes of eldest birth,
Reared warm in pathless woods and cherished well.
And the sun sprang above the sea and fell,
And the stars rose and sank upon the sea ;
And outlaw-like, in forest wise and free,
The rising and the setting of their lights
Found those twain dwelling all those days and nights.
And under the change of sun and star and moon
Flourished and fell the chaplets woven of June,
And fair through fervours of the deepening sky
Panted and passed the hours that lit July,
And each day blessed them out of heaven above,
And each night crowned them with the crown of love.
Nor till the might of August overhead
Weighed on the world was yet one roseleaf shed
Of all their joy's warm coronal, nor aught
Touched them in passing ever with a thought
That ever this might end on any day
Or any night not love them where they lay ;
But like a babbling tale of barren breath
Seemed all report and rumour held of death,
And a false bruit the legend tear-impearled
That such a thing as change was in the world.
And each bright song upon his lips that came,
Mocking the powers of change and death by name,
Blasphemed their bitter godhead, and defied
Time, though clothed round with ruin as kings with pride,
To blot the glad life out of love : and she
Drank lightly deep of his philosophy
In that warm wine of amorous words which is
Sweet with all truths of all philosophies.
For well he wist all subtle ways of song,
And in his soul the secret eye was strong
That burns in meditation, till bright words
Break flamelike forth as notes from fledgeling birds
That feel the soul speak through them of the spring.
So fared they night and day as queen and king
Crowned of a kingdom wide as day and night.
Nor ever cloudlet swept or swam in sight
Across the darkling depths of their delight
Whose stars no skill might number, nor man's art
Sound the deep stories of its heavenly heart.
Till, even for wonder that such life should live,
Desires and dreams of what death's self might give
Would touch with tears and laughter and with speech
The lips and eyes of passion, fain to reach,
Beyond all bourne of time or trembling sense,
The verge of love's last possible eminence.
Out of the heaven that storm nor shadow mars,
Deep from the starry depth beyond the stars,
A yearning ardour without scope or name
Fell on them, and the bright night's breath of flame
Shot fire into their kisses ; and like fire
The lit dews lightened on the leaves, as higher
Night's heart beat on toward midnight. Far and fain
Somewhiles the soft rush of rejoicing rain
Solaced the darkness, and from steep to steep
Of heaven they saw the sweet sheet lightning leap
And laugh its heart out in a thousand smiles,
When the clear sea for miles on glimmering miles
Burned as though dawn were strewn abroad astray,
Or, showering out of heaven all heaven's array

Had paven instead the waters: fain and far
Somewhiles the burning love of star for star
Spake words that love might wellnigh seem to hear
In such deep hours as turn delight to fear
Sweet as delight's self ever. So they lay
Tranced once, nor watched along the fiery bay
The shrine of summer darkness palpitate and play.
She had nor sight nor voice; her swooning eyes
Knew not if night or light were in the skies;
Across her beauty sheer the moondawn shed
Its light as on a thing as white and dead;
Only with stress of soft fierce hands she prest
Between the throbbing blossoms of her breast
His ardent face, and through his hair her breath
Went quivering as when life is hard on death;
And with strong trembling fingers she strained fast
His head into her bosom; till at last,
Satiate with sweetness of that burning bed,
His eyes afire with tears, he raised his head
And laughed into her lips; and all his heart
Filled hers; then face from face fell, and apart
Each hung on each with panting lips, and felt
Sense into sense and spirit in spirit melt.
'Hast thou no sword? I would not live till day;
O love, this night and we must pass away,
It must die soon, and let not us die late.'
'Take then my sword and slay me; nay, but wait
Till day be risen; what, wouldst thou think to die
Before the light take hold upon the sky?'
'Yea, love; for how shall we have twice, being twain,
This very night of love's most rapturous reign?
Live thou and have thy day, and year by year
Be great, but what shall I be? Slay me here;
Let me die not when love lies dead, but now
Strike through my heart: nay, sweet, what heart hast thou?
Is it too much I ask thee, and spend my breath
In asking? nay, thou knowest it is but death.
Hadst thou true heart to love me, thou wouldst give
This: but for hate's sake thou wilt let me live.'
Here he caught up her lips with his, and made
The wild prayer silent in her heart that prayed,
And strained her to him till all her faint breath sank
And her bright light limbs palpitated and shrank
And rose and fluctuated as flowers in rain
That bend them and they tremble and rise again
And heave and straighten and quiver all through with bliss
And turn afresh their mouths up for a kiss,
Amorous, athirst of that sweet influent love;
So, hungering toward his hovering lips above,
Her red-rose mouth yearned silent, and her eyes
Closed, and flashed after, as though June's darkest skies
The divine heartbeats of the deep live light
Make open and shut the gates of the outer night.
Long lay they still, subdued with love, nor knew
If cloud or light changed colour as it grew,
If star or moon beheld them; if above
The heaven of night waxed fiery with their love,
Or earth beneath were moved at heart and root
To burn as they, to burn and bring forth fruit
Unseasonable for love's sake; if tall trees
Bowed, and close flowers yearned open, and the breeze
Failed and fell silent as a flame that fails:
And all that hour unheard the nightingales
Clamoured, and all the woodland soul was stirred,
And depth and height were one great song unheard,
As though the world caught music and took fire
From the instant heart alone of their desire.
So sped their night of nights between them: so,
For all fears past and shadows, shine and snow,
That one pure hour all-golded where they lay
Made their life perfect and their darkness day.
And warmer waved its harvest yet to reap,
Till in the lovely fight of love and sleep
At length had sleep the mastery; and the dark
Was lit with soft live gleams they might not mark,

Fleet butterflies, each like a dead flower's ghost,
White, blue, and sere leaf-coloured ; but the most
White as the sparkle of snow-flowers in the sun
Ere with his breath they lie at noon undone
Whose kiss devours their tender beauty, and leaves
But raindrops on the grass and sere thin leaves
That were engraven with traceries of the snow
Flowerwise ere any flower of earth's would blow ;
So swift they sprang and sank, so sweet and light
They swam the deep dim breathless air of night.
Now on her rose-white amorous breast half bare,
Now on her slumberous love-dishevelled hair,
The white wings lit and vanished, and afresh
Lit soft as snow lights on her snow-soft flesh,
On hand or throat or shoulder ; and she stirred
Sleeping, and spake some tremulous bright word,
And laughed upon some dream too sweet for truth,
Yet not so sweet as very love and youth
That there had charmed her eyes to sleep at last.
Nor woke they till the perfect night was past,
And the soft sea thrilled with blind hope of light.
But ere the dusk had well the sun in sigh'
He turned and kissed her eyes awake and said,
Seeing earth and water neither quick nor dead
And twilight hungering toward the day to be
'As the dawn loves the sunlight I love thee.'
And even as rays with cloudlets in the skies
Confused in brief love's bright contentious wise,
Sleep strove with sense rekindling in her eyes ;
And as the flush of birth scarce overcame
The pale pure pearl of unborn light with flame
Soft as may touch the rose's heart with shame
To break not all reluctant out of bud,
Stole up her sleeping cheek her waking blood,
And with the lovely laugh of love that takes
The whole soul prisoner ere the whole sense wakes,
Her lips for love's sake bade love's will be done.
And all the sea lay subject to the sun.

III.

TRISTRAM IN BRITTANY.

'As the dawn loves the sunlight I love thee ;"
As men that shall be swallowed of the sea
Love the sea's lovely beauty ; as the night
That wanes before it loves the young sweet light,
And dies of loving ; as the worn-out noon
Loves twilight, and as twilight loves the moon
That on its grave a silver seal shall set—
We have loved and slain each other, and love yet
Slain ; for we live not surely, being in twain
In her I lived, and in me she is slain.
Who loved me that I brought her to her doom,
Who loved her that her love might be my tomb.
As all the streams on earth and all fresh springs
And sweetest waters, every brook that sings,
Each fountain where the young year dips its wings

First, and the first-fledged branches of it wave,
Even with one heart's love seek one bitter grave.
From hills that first see bared the morning's breast,
And heights the sun last yearns to from the west,
All tend but toward the sea, all born most high
Strive downward, passing all things joyous by,
Seek to it and cast their lives in it and die.
So strive all lives for death which all lives win;
So sought her soul to my soul, and therein
Was poured and perished: O my love, and mine
Sought to thee and died of thee and died as thine.
As the dawn loves the sunlight that must cease
Ere dawn again may rise and pass in peace;
Must die that she being dead may live again,
To be by his new rising nearly slain.
So rolls the great wheel of the great world round,
And no change in it and no fault is found,
And no true life of perdurable breath,
And surely no irrevocable death.
Day after day night comes that day may break,
And day comes back for night's reiterate sake.
Each into each dies, each of each is born:
Day past is night, shall night past not be morn?
Out of this moonless and faint-hearted night
That love yet lives in, shall there not be light?
Light strong as love, that love may live in yet?
Alas, but how shall foolish hope forget
How all these loving things that kill and die
Meet not but for a breath's space and pass by?
Night is kissed once of dawn and dies, and day
But touches twilight and is rapt away.
So may my love and her love meet once more.
And meeting be divided as of yore.
Yea, surely as the day-star loves the sun
And when he hath risen is utterly undone,
So is my love of her and hers of me—
And its most sweetness bitter as the sea.
Would God yet dawn might see the sun and die!'
Three years had looked on earth and passed it by
Since Tristram looked on Iseult, when he stood
So communing with dreams of evil and good,
And let all sad thoughts through his spirit sweep
As leaves through air or tears through eyes that weep
Or snowflakes through dark weather: and his soul,
That had seen all those sightless seasons roll
One after one, wave over weary wave,
Was in him as a corpse is in its grave.
Yet, for his heart was mighty, and his might
Through all the world as a great sound and light.
The mood was rare upon him; save that here
In the low sundawn of the lightening year
With all last year's toil and its triumph done
He could not choose but yearn for that set sun
Which at this season saw the firstborn kiss
That made his lady's mouth one fire with his.
Yet his great heart being greater than his grief
Kept all the summer of his strength in leaf
And all the rose of his sweet spirit in flower;
Still his soul fed upon the sovereign hour
That had been or that should be; and once more
He looked through drifted sea and drifting shore
That crumbled in the wave-breach, and again
Spake sad and deep within himself: 'What pain
Should make a man's soul wholly break and die,
Sapped as weak sand by water? How shall I
Be less than all less things are that endure
And strive and yield when time is? Nay, full sure
All these and we are parts of one same end;
And if through fire or water we twain tend
To that sure life where both must be made one,
If one we be, what matter? Thou, O sun,
The face of God, if God thou be not—nay,
What but God should I think thee, what should say,
Seeing thee rerisen, but very God?—should I,
I fool, rebuke thee sovereign in thy sky,

The clouds dead round thee and the air alive,
The winds that lighten and the waves that strive
Toward this shore as to that beneath thy breath,
Because in me my thoughts bear all towards death?
O sun, that when we are dead wilt rise as bright,
Air deepening up toward heaven, and nameless light,
And heaven immeasurable, and faint clouds blown
Between us and the lowest aerial zone
And each least skirt of their imperial state—
Forgive us that we held ourselves so great!
What should I do to curse you? I indeed
Am a thing meaner than this least wild seed
That my foot bruises and I know not—yet
Would not be mean enough for worms to fret
Before their time and mine was.
'Ah, and ye
Light washing weeds, blind waifs of dull blind sea,
Do ye so thirst and hunger and aspire,
Are ye so moved with such long strong desire
In the ebb and flow of your sad life, and strive
Still toward some end ye shall not see alive—
But at high noon ye know it by light and heat
Some half-hour, till ye feel the fresh tide beat
Up round you, and at night's most bitter noon
The ripples leave you naked to the moon?
And this dim dusty heather that I tread,
These half-born blossoms, born at once and dead,
Sere brown as funeral cloths, and purple as pall,
What if some life and grief be in them all?
'Ay, what of these? but, O strong sun! O sea!
I bid not you, divine things! comfort me,
I stand not up to match you in your sight—
Who hath said ye have mercy toward us, ye who have might?
And though ye had mercy, I think I would not pray
That ye should change your counsel or your way
To make our life less bitter: if such power
Be given the stars on one deciduous hour,
And such might be in planets to destroy
Grief and rebuild, and break and build up joy,
What man would stretch forth hand on them to make
Fate mutable, God foolish, for his sake?
For if in life or death be aught of trust,
And if some unseen just God or unjust
Put soul into the body of natural things
And in time's pauseless feet and worldwide wings
Some spirit of impulse and some sense of will
That steers them through the seas of good and ill
To some incognizable and actual end,
Be it just or unjust, foe to man or friend,
How should we make the stable spirit to swerve,
How teach the strong soul of the world to serve,
The imperious will in time and sense in space
That gives man life turn back to give man place—
The conscious law lose conscience of its way,
The rule and reason fail from night and day,
The streams flow back toward whence the springs began,
That less of thirst might sear the lips of man?
Let that which is be, and sure strengths stand sure,
And evil or good and death or life endure,
Not alterable and rootless, but indeed
A very stem born of a very seed
That brings forth fruit in season: how should this
Die that was sown, and that not be which is,
And the old fruit change that came of the ancient root,
And he that planted bid it not bear fruit,
And he that watered smite his vine with drouth
Because its grapes are bitter in our mouth,
And he that kindled quench the sun with night
Because its beams are fire against our sight,
And he that tuned untune the sounding spheres
Because their song is thunder in our ears.
How should the skies change and the stars and time
Break the large concord of the years that chime,
Answering, as wave to wave beneath the moon
That draws them shoreward, mar the whole tide's tune
For the instant foam's sake on one turning wave—
For man's sake that is grass upon a grave?

How should the law that knows not soon or late,
For whom no time nor space is—how should fate,
That is not good nor evil, wise nor mad,
Nor just nor unjust, neither glad nor sad—
How should the one thing that hath being, the one
That moves not as the stars move or the sun
Or any shadow or shape that lives or dies
In likeness of dead earth or living skies,
But its own darkness and its proper light
Clothe it with other names than day or night,
And its own soul of strength and spirit of breath
Feed it with other powers than life or death—
How should it turn from its great way to give
Man that must die a clearer space to live?
Why should the waters of the sea be cleft,
The hills be molten to his right and left,
That he from deep to deep might pass dry-shod,
Or look between the viewless heights on God?
Hath he such eyes as, when the shadows flee,
The sun looks out with to salute the sea?
Is his hand bounteous as the morning's hand?
Or where the night stands hath he feet to stand
Will the storm cry not when he bids it cease?
Is it his voice that saith to the east wind, Peace!
Is his breath mightier than the west wind's breath?
Doth his heart know the things of life and death?
Can his face bring forth sunshine and give rain,
Or his weak will that dies and lives again
Make one thing certain or bind one thing fast,
That as he willed it shall be at the last?
How should the storms of heaven and kindled lights
And all the depths of things and topless heights
And air and earth and fire and water change
Their likeness, and the natural world grow strange,
And all the limits of their life undone
Lose count of time and conscience of the sun,
And that fall under which was fixed above,
That man might have a larger hour for love?'
So musing with close lips and lifted eyes
That smiled with self-contempt to live so wise,
With silent heart so hungry now so long,
So late grown clear, so miserably made strong,
About the wolds a banished man he went,
The brown wolds bare and sad as banishment,
By wastes of fruitless flowerage, and grey downs
That felt the sea-wind shake their wild-flower crowns
As though fierce hands would pluck from some grey head
The spoils of majesty despised and dead,
And fill with crying and comfortless strange sound
Their hollow sides and heights of herbless ground.
Yet as he went fresh courage on him came,
Till dawn rose too within him as a flame,
The heart of the ancient hills and his were one;
The winds took counsel with him, and the sun
Spake comfort; in his ears the shout of birds
Was as the sound of clear sweet-spirited words,
The noise of streams as laughter from above
Of the old wild lands, and as a cry of love
Spring's trumpet-blast blown over moor and lea:
The skies were red as love is, and the sea
Was as the floor of heaven for love to tread.
So went he as with light about his head,
And in the joyous travail of the year
Grew April-hearted; since nor grief nor fear
Can master so a young man's blood so long
That it shall move not to the mounting song
Of that sweet hour when earth replumes her wings
And with fair face and heart set heavenward sings
As an awakened angel unaware
That feels his sleep fall from him, and his hair
By some new breath of wind and music stirred,
Till like the sole song of one heavenly bird
Sounds all the singing of the host of heaven,
And all the glories of the sovereign Seven
Are as one face of one incorporate light,
And as that host of singers in God's sight
Might draw toward one that slumbered, and arouse
The lips requickened and rekindling brows.

So seemed the earthly host of all things born
In sight of spring and eyeshot of the morn,
All births of land or waifs of wind and sea,
To draw toward him that sorrowed, and set free
From presage and remembrance of all pains
The life that leapt and lightened in his veins.
So with no sense abashed nor sunless look,
But with exalted eyes and heart, he took
His part of sun or storm-wind, and was glad,
For all things lost, of these good things he had.
And the spring loved him surely, being from birth
One made out of the better part of earth,
A man born as at sunrise ; one that saw
Not without reverence and sweet sense of awe
But wholly without fear of fitful breath
The face of life watched by the face of death;
And living took his fill of rest and strife,
Of love and change, and fruit and seed of life,
And when his time to live in light was done
With unbent head would pass out of the sun:
A spirit as morning, fair and clear and strong,
Whose thought and work were as one harp and song
Heard through the world as in a strange king's hall
Some great guest's voice that sings of festival.
So seemed all things to love him, and his heart
In all their joy of life to take such part,
That with the live earth and the living sea
He was as one that communed mutually
With naked heart to heart of friend to friend:
And the star deepening at the sunset's end,
And the moon fallen before the gate of day
As one sore wearied with vain length of way,
And the winds wandering, and the streams and skies,
As faces of his fellows in his eyes.
Nor lacked there love where he was evermore
Of man and woman, friend of sea or shore,
Not measurable with weight of graven gold,
Free as the sun's gift of the world to hold
Given each day back to man's reconquering sight
That loses but its lordship for a night.
And now that after many a season spent
In barren ways and works of banishment,
Toil of strange fights and many a fruitless field,
Ventures of quest and vigils under shield,
He came back to the strait of sundering sea
That parts green Cornwall from grey Brittany,
Where dwelt the high king's daughter of the lands,
Iseult, named alway from her fair white hands,
She looked on him and loved him ; but being young
Made shamefastness a seal upon her tongue,
And on her heart, that none might hear its cry,
Set the sweet signet of humility.
Yet when he came a stranger in her sight,
A banished man and weary, no such knight
As when the Swallow dipped her bows in foam
Steered singing that imperial Iseult home
This maiden with her sinless sixteen years
Full of sweet thoughts and hopes that played at fears
Cast her eyes on him but in courteous wise,
And lo, the man's face burned upon her eyes
As though she had turned them on the naked sun :
And through her limbs she felt sweet passion run
As fire that flowed down from her face, and beat
Soft through stirred veins on even to her hands and feet
As all her body were one heart on flame,
Athrob with love and wonder and sweet shame.
And when he spake there sounded in her ears
As 'twere a song out of the graves of years
Heard and again forgotten, and again
Remembered with a rapturous pulse of pain.
But as the maiden mountain snow sublime
Takes the first sense of April's trembling time
Soft on a brow that burns not though it blush
To feel the sunrise hardly half aflush,
So took her soul the sense of change, nor thought
That more than maiden love was more than nought.
Her eyes went hardly after him, her cheek
Grew scarce a goodlier flower to hear him speak,
Her bright mouth no more trembled than a rose
May for the least wind's breathless sake that blows
Too soft to sue save for a sister's kiss,
And if she sighed in sleep she knew not this.

Yet in her heart hovered the thoughts of things
Past, that with lighter or with heavier wings
Beat round her memory, till it burned
With grief that brightened and with hope yearned,
Seeing him so great and sad, nor knowing what fate
Had bowed and crowned a head so sad and great.
Nor might she guess but little, first or last,
Though all her heart so hung upon his past,
Of what so bowed him for what sorrow's sake:
For scarce of aught at any time he spake
That from his own land oversea had sent
His lordly life to barren banishment.
Yet still or soft or keen remembrance clung
Close round her of the least word from his tongue
That fell by chance of courtesy, to greet
With grace of tender thanks her pity, sweet
As running streams to men's way-wearied feet.
And when between strange words her name would fall
Suddenly straightway to that lure's recall
Back would his heart bound as the falconer's bird
And tremble and bow down before the word.
'Iseult'—and all the cloudlike world grew flame,
And all his heart flashed lightning at her name;
'Iseult'—and all the wan waste weary skies
Shone as his queen's own love-enkindled eyes.
And seeing the bright blood in his face leap up
As red wine mantling in a royal cup
To hear the sudden sweetness of the sound
Ring, but ere well his heart had time to bound
His cheek would change, and grief bow down his head,
'Haply,' the girl's heart, though she spake not, said,
'This name of mine was worn of one long dead,
Some sister that he loved:' and therewithal
Would pity bring her heart more deep in thrall.
But once, when winds about the world made mirth,
And March held revel hard on April's birth
Till air and sea were jubilant as earth,
Delight and doubt in sense and soul began,
And yearning of the maiden toward the man,
Harping on high before her: for his word
Was fire that kindled in her heart that heard,
And alway through the rhymes reverberate came
The virginal soft burden of her name.
And ere the full song failed upon her ear
Joy strove within her till it cast out fear,
And all her heart was as his harp, and rang
Swift music, made of hope whose birthnote sprang
Bright in the blood that kindled as he sang.

'Stars know not how we call them, nor may flowers
Know by what happy name the hovering hours
Baptize their new-born heads with dew and flame:
And Love, adored of all time as of ours,
Iseult, knew nought for ages of his name.

'With many tongues men called on him, but he
Wist not which word of all might worthiest be
To sound for ever in his ear the same,
Till heart of man might hear and soul might see,
Iseult, the radiance ringing from thy name.

'By many names men called him, as the night
By many a name calls many a starry light,
Her several sovereigns of dividual fame;
But day by one name only calls aright,
Iseult, the sun that bids men praise his name.

'In many a name of man his name soared high
And song shone round it soaring, till the sky
Rang rapture, and the world's fast-founded frame
Trembled with sense of triumph, even as I,
Iseult, with sense of worship at thy name.

'In many a name of woman smiled his power
Incarnate, as all summer in a flower,
Till winter bring forgetfulness or shame:
But thine, the keystone of his topless tower,
Iseult, is one with Love's own lordliest name.

'Iseult my love, Iseult my queen twice crowned,
In thee my death, in thee my life lies bound:
Names are there yet that all men's hearts acclaim,
But Love's own heart rings answer to the sound,
Iseult, that bids it bow before thy name.'

There ceased his voice yearning upon the word,
Struck with strong passion dumb: but she that heard
Quailed to the heart, and trembled ere her eyes
Durst let the loving light within them rise,
And yearn on his for answer: yet at last,
Albeit not all her fear was overpast,
Hope, kindling even the frost of fear apace

With sweet fleet bloom and breath of gradual grace,
Flushed in the changing roses of her face.
And ere the strife took truce of white with red,
Or joy for soft shame's sake durst lift up head,
Something she would and would not fain have said. [be,
And wist not what the fluttering word would
But rose and reached forth to him her hand: and he,
Heart-stricken, bowed his head and dropped his knee.
And on her fragrant hand his lips were fire;
And their two hearts were as one trembling lyre
Touched by the keen wind's kiss with brief desire
And music shuddering at its own delight.
So dawned the moonrise of their marriage night.

IV.

THE MAIDEN MARRIAGE.

SPRING watched her last moon burn and fade with May
While the days deepened toward a bridal day.
And on her snowbright hand the ring was set
While in the maiden's ear the song's word yet
Hovered, that hailed as love's own queen by name
Iseult · and in her heart the word was flame;
A pulse of light, a breath of tender fire,
Too dear for doubt, too driftless for desire.
Between her father's hand and brother's led
From hall to shrine, from shrine to marriage-bed,
She saw not how by hap at home-coming
Fell from her new lord's hand a royal ring,
Whereon he looked, and felt the pulse astart
Speak passion in his faith-forsaken heart.
For this was given him of the hand wherein
That heart's pledge lay for ever: so the sin
That should be done if truly he should take
This maid to wife for strange love's faithless sake
Struck all his mounting spirit abashed, and fear
Fell cold for shame's sake on his changing cheer.
Yea, shame's own fire that burned upon his brow
To bear the brand there of a broken vow
Was frozen again for very fear thereof
That wrung his heart with keener pangs than love.
And all things rose upon him, all things past
Ere last they parted, cloven in twain at last,
Iseult from Tristram, Tristram from the queen;
And how men found them in the wild woods green
Sleeping, but sundered by the sword between,
Dividing breast from amorous breast a span,
But scarce in heart the woman from the man
As far as hope from joy or sleep from truth,
And Mark that saw them held for sacred sooth
These were no fleshly lovers, by that sign
That severed them, still slumbering; so divine
He deemed it: how at waking they beheld
The king's folk round the king, and uncompelled
Were fain to follow and fare among their home
Back to the towers washed round with rolling foam
And storied halls wherethrough sea-music rang:
And how report thereafter swelled and sprang,
A full-mouthed serpent, hissing in men's ears
Word of their loves: and one of all his peers
That most he trusted, being his kinsman born,
A man base-moulded for the stamp of scorn,
Whose heart with hate was keen and cold and dark,
Gave note by midnight whisper to King Mark

Where he might take them sleeping ; how ere day
Had seen the grim next morning all away
Fast bound they brought him down a weary way
With forty knights about him, and their chief
That traitor who for trust had given him grief,
To the old hoar chapel, like a strait stone tomb
Sheer on the sea-rocks, there to take his doom :
How, seeing he needs must die, he bade them yet
Bethink them if they durst for shame forget
What deeds for Cornwall had he done, and wrought
For all their sake what rescue, when he fought
Against the fierce foul Irish foe that came
To take of them for tribute in their shame
Three hundred heads of children ; whom in fight
His hand redeeming slew Morannt the knight
That none durst lift his eyes against, not one
Had heart but he, who now had help of none,
To take the battle ; whence great shame it were
To knighthood, yea, foul shame on all men there,
To see him die so shamefully : nor durst
One man look up, nor one make answer first,
Save even the very traitor, who defied
And would have slain him naked in his pride,
But he, that saw the sword plucked forth to slay,
Looked on his hands and wrenched their bonds away,
Haling those twain that he went bound between
Suddenly to him, and kindling in his mien
Shone lion-fashion forth with eyes alight,
And lion-wise leapt on that kinsman knight
And wrung forth of his felon hands with might
The sword that should have slain him weaponless
And smote him sheer down : then came all the press
All raging in upon him ; but he wrought
So well for his deliverance as they fought
That ten strong knights rejoicingly he slew,
And took no wound, nor wearied : then the crew
Waxed greater, and their cry on him ; but he
Had won the chapel now above the sea
That chafed right under : then the heart in him
Sprang, seeing the low cliff clear to leap, and swim
Right out by the old blithe way the sea-mew takes
Across the bounding billow-belt that breaks
For ever, but the loud bright chain it makes
To bind the bridal bosom of the land
Time shall unlink not ever, till his hand
Fall by its own last blow dead : thence again
Might he win forth into the green great main
Far on beyond, and there yield up his breath
At least, with God's will, by no shameful death,
Or haply save himself, and come anew
Some long day later, ere sweet life were through.
And as the sea-gull hovers high, and turns
With eyes wherein the keen heart glittering yearns
Down toward the sweet green sea whereon the broad noon burns,
And suddenly, soul-stricken with delight,
Drops, and the glad wave gladdens, and the light
Sees wing and wave confuse their fluttering white,
So Tristram one brief breathing-space apart
Hung, and gazed down ; then with exulting heart
Plunged : and the fleet foam round a joyous head
Flashed, that shot under, and ere a shaft had sped
Rose again radiant, a rejoicing star,
And high along the water-ways afar
Triumphed : and they deemed he needs must die ;
But Gouvernayle his squire, that watched hard by,
Sought where perchance a man might win ashore,
Striving, with strong limbs labouring long and sore,
And there abode an hour : till as from fight
Crowned with hard conquest won by mastering might,
Hardly, but happier for the imperious toil,
Swam the knight in forth of the close waves coil,
Sea-satiate, bruised with buffets of the brine,
Laughing, and flushed as one afire with wine
All this came hard upon him in a breath ;
And how he marvelled in his heart that death

Should be no bitterer than it seemed to be
There, in the strenuous impulse of the sea
Born as to battle deathward : and at last
How all his after seasons overpast
Had brought him darkling to this dark sweet hour,
Where his foot faltered nigh the bridal bower,
And harder seemed the passage now to pass,
Though smoother-seeming than the still sea's glass,
More fit for very manhood's heart to fear,
Than all straits past of peril. Hardly here
Might aught of all things hearten him save one,
Faith : and as men's eyes quail before the sun
So quailed his heart before the star whose light
Put out the torches of his bridal night,
So quailed and shrank with sense of faith's keen star
That burned as fire beheld by night afar
Deep in the darkness of his dreams ; for all
The bride-house now seemed hung with heavier pall
Than clothes the house of mourning. Yet at last,
Soul-sick with trembling at the heart, he passed
Into the sweet light of the maiden bower
Where lay the lonely lily-featured flower
That, lying within his hand to gather, yet
Might not be gathered of it. Fierce regret
And bitter loyalty strove hard at strife
With amorous pity toward the tender wife
That wife indeed might never be, to wear
The very crown of wedlock ; never bear
Children, to watch and worship her white hair
When time should change, with hand more soft than snow,
The fashion of its glory ; never know
The loveliness of laughing love that lives
On little lips of children : all that gives
Glory and grace and reverence and delight
To wedded woman by her bridal right,
All praise and pride that flowers too fair to fall,
Love that should give had stripped her of them all
And left her bare for ever. So his thought
Consumed him, as a fire within that wrought
Visibly, ravening till its wrath were spent :
So pale he stood, so bowed and passion-rent,
Before the blithe-faced bride-folk, ere he went
Within the chamber, heavy-eyed : and there
Gleamed the white hands and glowed the glimmering hair
That might but move his memory more of one more fair,
More fair than all this beauty : but in sooth
So fair she too shone in her flower of youth
That scarcely might man's heart hold fast its truth,
Though strong, who gazed upon her : for her eyes
Were emerald-soft as evening-coloured skies,
And a smile in them like the light therein
Slept, or shone out in joy that knew not sin,
Clear as a child's own laughter : and her mouth,
Albeit no rose full-hearted from the south
And passion-colored for the perfect kiss
That signs the soul for love and stamps it his,
Was soft and bright as any bud new-blown ;
And through her cheek the gentler lifebloom shone
Of mild wild roses nigh the northward sea.
So in her bride-bed lay the bride : and he
Drew nigh, and all the high sad heart in him
Yearned on her, seeing the twilight meek and dim
Through all the soft alcove tremblingly lit
With hovering silver, as a heart in it
Beating, that burned from one deep lamp above,
Fainter than fire of torches, as the love
Within him fainter than a bridegroom's fire,
No marriage-torch red with the heart's desire,
But silver-soft, a flameless light that glowed
Starlike along night's dark and starry road
Wherein his soul was traveller. And he sighed,
Seeing, and with eyes set sadly toward his bride
Laid him down by her, and spake not ; but within
His heart spake, saying how sore should be the sin
To break toward her, that of all womankind
Was faithfullest, faith plighted, or unbind
The bond first linked between them when they drank
The love-draught : and his quick blood sprang and sank,
Remembering in the pulse of all his veins
That red swift rapture, all its fiery pains
And all its fierier pleasures : and he spake
Aloud, one burning word for love's keen sake—

Iseult ;' and full of love and lovelier fear
A virgin voice gave answer—'I am here.'
And a pang rent his heart at root : but still,
For spirit and flesh were vassals to his will,
Strong faith held mastery on them : and the breath
Felt on his face did not his will to death,
Nor glance nor lute-like voice nor flower-soft touch
Might so prevail upon it overmuch
That constancy might less prevail than they,
For all he looked and loved her as she lay
Smiling ; and soft as bird alights on bough
He kissed her maiden mouth and blameless brow,
Once, and again his heart within him sighed:
But all his young blood's yearning toward his bride,
How hard soe'er it held his life awake
For passion, and sweet nature's unforbidden sake,
And will that strove unwillingly with will it might not break,
Fell silent as a wind abashed, whose breath
Dies out of heaven, suddenly done to death,
When in between them on the dumb dusk air
Floated the bright shade of a face more fair
Than hers that hard beside him shrank and smiled
And wist of all no more than might a child.
So had she all her heart's will, all she would,
For love's sake that sufficed her, glad and good,
All night safe sleeping in her maidenhood.

V.

ISEULT AT TINTAGEL.

But that same night in Cornwall oversea
Couched at Queen Iseult's hand, against her knee,
With keen kind eyes that read her whole heart's pain
Fast at wide watch lay Tristram's hound Hodain,
The goodliest and the mightiest born on earth,
That many a forest day of fiery mirth
Had plied his craft before them ; and the queen
Cherished him, even for those dim years between,
More than of old in those bright months far flown
When ere a blast of Tristram's horn was blown
Each morning as the woods rekindled, ere
Day gat full empire of the glimmering air,
Delight of dawn would quicken him, and fire
Spring and pant in his breath with bright desire
To be among the dewy ways on quest :
But now perforce at restless-hearted rest
He chafed through days more barren than the sand.
Soothed hardly but soothed only with her hand,
Though fain to fawn thereon and follow, still
With all his heart and all his loving will
Desiring one divided from his sight,
For whose lost sake dawn was as dawn of night
And noon as night's noon in his eyes was dark.
But in the halls far under sat King Mark,
Feasting, and full of cheer, with heart uplift,
As on the night that harper gat his gift :
And music revelled on the fitful air,
And songs came floated up the festal stair,
And muffled roar of wassail, where the king
Took heart from wine-cups and the quiring string
Till all his cold thin veins rejoiced and ran
Strong as with lifeblood of a kinglier man.
But the queen shut from sound her wearied ears,
Shut her sad eyes from sense of aught save tears,

And wrung her hair with soft fierce hands, and prayed :
'O God, God born of woman, of a maid,
Christ, once in flesh of thine own fashion clad ;
O very love, so glad in heaven and sad
On earth for earth's sake alway : since thou art
Pure only, I only impure of spirit and heart,
Since thou for sin's sake and the bitter doom
Didst as a veil put on a virgin's womb,
I that am none, and cannot hear or see
Or shadow or likeness or a sound of thee
Far off, albeit with man's own speech and face
Thou shine yet and thou speak yet, showing forth grace—
Ah me ! grace only shed on souls that are
Lit and led forth of shadow by thy star—
Alas ! to these men only grace, to these,
Lord, whom thy love draws Godward, to thy knees—
I, can I draw thee me-ward, can I seek,
Who love thee not, to love me ? seeing how weak,
Lord, all this little love I bear thee is,
And how much is my strong love more than this,
My love that I love man with, that I bear
Him sinning through me sinning ? wilt thou care,
God, for this love, if love be any, alas,
In me to give thee, though long since there was,
How long, when I too, Lord, was clean, even I,
That now am unclean till the day I die—
Haply by burning, harlot-fashion, made
A horror in all hearts of wife and maid,
Hateful, not knowing if ever in these mine eyes
Shone any light of thine in any wise
Or this were love at all that I bore thee ?'
And the night spake, and thundered on the sea,
Ravening aloud for ruin of lives : and all
The bastions of the main cliff's northward wall
Rang response out from all their deepening length,
As the east wind girded up his godlike strength
And hurled in hard against that high-towered hold
The fleeces of the flock that knows no fold,
The rent white shreds of shattering storm : but she
Heard not nor heeded wind or storming sea,
Knew not if night were mild or mad with wind.
'Yea, though deep lips and tender hair be thinned,
Though cheek wither, brow fade, and bosom wane,
Shall I change also from this heart again
To maidenhood of heart and holiness ?
Shall I more love thee, Lord, or love him less—
Ah miserable ! though spirit and heart be rent,
Shall I repent, Lord God ? shall I repent ?
Nay, though thou slay me ! for herein I am blest,
That as I loved him yet I love him best—
More than mine own soul or thy love or thee,
Though thy love save and my love save not me.
Blest am I beyond women even herein,
That beyond all born women is my sin,
And perfect my transgression : that above
All offerings of all others is my love,
Who have chosen it only, and put away for this
Thee, and my soul's hope, Saviour, of the kiss
Wherewith thy lips make welcome all thine own
When in them life and death are overthrown ;
The sinless lips that seal the death of sin,
The kiss wherewith their dumb lips touched begin
Singing in heaven,
'Where we shall never, love,
Never stand up nor sing ! for God above
Knows us, how too much more than God to me
Thy sweet love is, my poor love is to thee !
Dear, dost thou see now, dost thou hear to-night,
Sleeping, my waste wild speech, my face worn white,
—Speech once heard soft by thee, face once kissed red !—
In such a dream as when men see their dead
And know not if they know if dead these be ?
Ah love, are thy days my days, and to thee
Are all nights like as my nights ? does the sun
Grieve thee ? art thou soul-sick till day be done,
And weary till day rises ? is thine heart
Full of dead things as mine is ? Nay, thou art

Man, with man's strength and praise and pride of life,
No bondwoman, no queen, no loveless wife
That would be shamed albeit she had not sinned.'
And swordlike was the sound of the iron wind,
And as a breaking battle was the sea.
'Nay, Lord, I pray thee let him love not me,
Love me not any more, nor like me die,
And be no more than such a thing as I.
Turn his heart from me, lest my love too lose
Thee as I lose thee, and his fair soul refuse
For my sake thy fair heaven, and as I fell
Fall, and be mixed with my soul and with hell.
Let me die rather, and only; let me be
Hated of him so he be loved of thee,
Lord: for I would not have him with me there
Out of thy light and love in the unlit air,
Out of thy sight in the unseen hell where I
Go gladly, going alone, so thou on high
Lift up his soul and love him—Ah, Lord, Lord,
Shalt thou love as I love him? she that poured
From the alabaster broken at thy feet
An ointment very precious, not so sweet
As that poured likewise forth before thee then
From the rehallowed heart of Magdalen,
From a heart broken, yearning like the dove,
An ointment very precious which is love—
Couldst thou being holy and God, and sinful she
Love her indeed as surely she loved thee?
Nay, but if not, then as we sinners can
Let us love still in the old sad wise of man.
For with less love than my love, having had
Mine, though God love him he shall not be glad.
And with such love as my love, I wot well,
He shall not lie disconsolate in hell:
Sad only as souls for utter love's sake be
Here, and a little sad, perchance, for me—
Me happy, me more glad than God above,
In the utmost hell whose fires consume not love!
For in the waste ways emptied of the sun
He would say—"Dear, thy place is void, and one
Weeps among angels for thee, with his face
Veiled, saying, *O sister, how thy chosen place*
Stands desolate that God made fair for thee;
Is heaven not sweeter, and we thy brethren, we
Fairer than love on earth and life in hell?"
And I—with me were all things then not well?
Should I not answer—"O love, be well content;
Look on me, and behold if I repent."
This were more to me than an angel's wings.
Yea, many men pray God for many things,
But I pray that this only thing may be.'
And as a full field charging was the sea.
And as the cry of slain men was the wind.
'Yea, since I surely loved him, and he sinned
Surely, though not as my sin his be black,
God, give him to me—God, God, give him back!
For now how should we live in twain or die?
I am he indeed, thou knowest, and he is I.
Not man and woman several as we were,
But one thing with one life and death to bear.
How should one love his own soul overmuch?
And time is long since last I felt the touch,
The sweet touch of my lover, hand and breath,
In such delight as puts delight to death,
Burn my soul through, till spirit and soul and sense,
In the sharp grasp of the hour, with violence
Died, and again through pangs of violent birth
Lived, and laughed out with refluent might of mirth;
Laughed each on other and shuddered into one,
As a cloud shuddering dies into the sun.
Ah, sense is that or spirit, soul or flesh,
That only love lulls or awakes afresh?
Ah, sweet is that or bitter, evil or good,
That very love allays not as he would?
Nay, truth is this or vanity, that gives
No love assurance when love dies or lives?
This that my spirit is wrung withal, and yet
No surelier knows if haply thine forget,
Thou that my spirit is wrung for, nor can say
Love is not in thee dead as yesterday?
Dost thou feel, thou, this heartbeat whence my heart
Would send thee word what life is mine apart,
And know by keen response what life is thine?
Dost thou not hear one cry of all of mine?
O Tristram's heart, have I no part in thee?'
And all her soul was as the breaking sea,

And all her heart anhungered as the wind.
'Dost thou repent thee of the sin we sinned?
Dost thou repent thee of the days and nights
That kindled and that quenched for us their lights,
The months that feasted us with all their hours,
The ways that breathed of us in all their flowers,
The dells that sang of us with all their doves?
Dost thou repent thee of the wildwood loves?
Is thine heart changed, and hallowed? art thou grown
God's and not mine? Yet, though my heart make moan,
Fain would my soul give thanks for thine, if thou
Be saved—yea, fain praise God, and knows not how.
How should it know thanksgiving? nay, or learn
Aught of the love wherewith thine own should burn,
God's, that should cast out as an evil thing
Mine? yea, what hand of prayer have I to cling,
What heart to prophesy, what spirit of sight
To strain insensual eyes toward increate light,
Who look but back on life wherein I sinned?'
And all their past came wailing in the wind,
And all their future thundered in the sea.
'But if my soul might touch the time to be,
If hand might handle now or eye behold
My life and death ordained me from of old,
Life palpable, compact of blood and breath,
Visible, present, naked, very death,
Should I desire to know before the day
These that I know not, nor is man that may?
For haply, seeing, my heart would break for fear,
And my soul timeless cast its load off here,
Its load of life too bitter, love too sweet,
And fall down shamed and naked at thy feet,
God, who wouldst take no pity of it, nor give
One hour back, one of all its hours to live
Clothed with my mortal body, that once more,
Once, on this reach of barren beaten shore,
This stormy strand of life, ere sail were set,
Had haply felt love's arms about it yet—
Yea, ere death's bark put off to seaward, might
With many a grief have bought me one delight
That then should know me never. Ah, what years
Would I endure not, filled up full with tears,
Bitter like blood and dark as dread of death,
To win one amorous hour of mingling breath,
One fire-eyed hour and sunnier than the sun,
For all these nights and days like nights but one?
One hour of heaven born once, a stormless birth,
For all these windy weary hours of earth?
One, but one hour from birth of joy to death,
For all these hungering hours of feverish breath?
And I should lose this, having died and sinned.'
And as man's anguish clamouring cried the wind,
And as God's anger answering rang the sea
'And yet what life—Lord God, what life for me
Has thy strong wrath made ready? Dost thou think
How lips whose thirst hath only tears to drink
Grow grey for grief untimely? Dost thou know,
O happy God, how men wax weary of woe—
Yea, for their wrong's sake that thine hand hath done
Come even to hate thy semblance in the sun?
Turn back from dawn and noon and all thy light
To make their souls one with the soul of night?
Christ, if thou hear yet or have eyes to see,
Thou that hadst pity, and hast no pity on me,
Know'st thou no more, as in this life's sharp span,
What pain thou hadst on earth, what pain hath man?
Hast thou no care, that all we suffer yet?
What help is ours of thee if thou forget?
What profit have we though thy blood were given,
If we that sin bleed and be not forgiven?
Not love but hate, thou bitter God and strange,
Whose heart as man's heart hath grown cold with change,
Not love but hate thou showest us that have sinned.'
And like a world's cry shuddering was the wind,

And like a God's voice threatening was the sea.
'Nay, Lord, for thou wast gracious; nay, in thee
No change can come with time or varying fate,
No tongue bid thine be less compassionate,
No sterner eye rebuke for mercy thine,
No sin put out thy pity—no, not mine.
Thou knowest us, Lord, thou knowest us, all we are,
He, and the soul that hath his soul for star:
Thou knowest as I know, Lord, how much more worth
Than all souls clad and clasped about with earth,
But most of all, God, how much more than I,
Is this man's soul that surely shall not die.
What righteousness, what judgment, Lord most high.
Were this, to bend a brow of doom as grim
As threats me, me the adulterous wife, on him?
There lies none other nightly by his side:
He hath not sought, he shall not seek a bride.
Far as God sunders earth from heaven above,
So far was my love born beneath his love.
I loved him as the sea-wind loves the sea,
To rend and ruin it only and waste: but he,
As the sea loves a sea-bird loved he me,
To foster and uphold my tired life's wing,
And bounteously beneath me spread forth spring,
A springtide space whereon to float or fly,
A world of happy water, whence the sky
Glowed goodlier, lightening from so glad a glass,
Than with its own light only. Now, alas!
Cloud hath come down and clothed it round with storm,
And gusts and fits of eddying winds deform
The feature of its glory. Yet be thou,
God, merciful: nay, show but justice now,
And let the sin in him that scarce was his
Stand expiated with exile: and be this
The price for him, the atonement this, that I
With all the sin upon me live, and die
With all thy wrath on me that most have sinned.'
And like man's heart relenting sighed the the wind,
And as God's wrath subsiding sank the sea.
'But if such grace be possible—if it be
Not sin more strange than all sins past, and worse
Evil, that cries upon thee for a curse,
To pray such prayers from such a heart, do thou
Hear, and make wide thine hearing toward me now;
Let not my soul and his for ever dwell
Sundered: though doom keep always heaven and hell
Irreconcilable, infinitely apart,
Keep not in twain for ever heart and heart
That once, albeit by not thy law, were one;
Let this be not thy will, that this be done.
Let all else, all thou wilt of evil, be,
But no doom, none, dividing him and me.'
By this was heaven stirred eastward, and there came
Up the rough ripple a labouring light like flame;
And dawn, sore trembling still and grey with fear,
Looked hardly forth, a face of heavier cheer
Than one which grief or dread yet half enshrouds,
Wild-eyed and wan, across the cleaving clouds.
And Iseult, worn with watch long held on pain,
Turned, and her eye lit on the hound Hodain.
And all her heart went out in tears: and he
Laid his kind head along her bended knee.
Till round his neck her arms went hard, and all
The night past from her as a chain might fall:
But yet the heart within her, half undone,
Wailed, and was loth to let her see the sun.
And ere full day brought heaven and earth to flower,
Far thence, a maiden in a marriage bower,
That moment, hard by Tristram, oversea,
Woke with glad eyes Iseult of Brittany.

VI.

JOYOUS GARD.

A little time, O Love, a little light,
A little hour for ease before the night.
Sweet Love, that art so bitter; foolish Love,
Whom wise men know for wiser, and thy dove
More subtle than the serpent; for thy sake
These pray thee for a little beam to break,
A little grace to help them, lest men think
Thy servants have but hours like tears to drink.
O Love, a little comfort, lest they fear
To serve as these have served thee who stand here.
For these are thine, thy servants these, that stand
Here nigh the limit of the wild north land,
At margin of the grey great eastern sea,
Dense-islanded with peaks and reefs, that see
No life but of the fleet wings fair and free
Which cleave the mist and sunlight all day long
With sleepless flight and cries more glad than song.
Strange ways of life have led him hither, here
To win fleet respite from desire and fear,
With armistice from sorrow; strange and sweet
Ways trodden by forlorn and casual feet
Till kindlier chance woke toward them kindly will
In happier hearts of lovers, and their ill
Found rest, as healing surely might it not,
By gift and kingly grace of Launcelot
At gracious bidding given of Guenevere.
For in the trembling twilight of this year
Ere April sprang from hope to certitude
Two hearts of friends fast linked had fallen at feud
As they rode forth on hawking, by the sign
Which gave his new bride's brother Ganhardine
To know the truth of Tristram's dealing, how
Faith kept of him against his marriage vow
Kept virginal his bride-bed night and morn;
Whereat, as wroth his blood should suffer scorn,
Came Ganhardine to Tristram, saying, 'Behold,
We have loved thee, and for love we have shown of old
Scorn hast thou shown us: wherefore is thy bride
Not thine indeed, a stranger at thy side,
Contemned? what evil hath she done, to be
Mocked with mouth-marriage and despised of thee,
Shamed, set at nought, rejected?' But there came
On Tristram's brow and eye the shadow and flame
Confused of wrath and wonder, ere he spake,
Saying, 'Hath she bid thee for thy sister's sake
Plead with me, who believed of her in heart
More nobly than to deem such piteous part
Should find so fair a player? or whence hast thou
Of us this knowledge?' 'Nay,' said he, 'but now,
Riding beneath these whitethorns overhead,
There fell a flower into her girdlestead
Which laughing she shook out, and smiling said—
"Lo, what large leave the wind hath given this stray,
To lie more near my heart than till this day
Aught ever since my mother lulled me lay
Or even my lord came ever;" whence I wot
We are all thy scorn, a race regarded not
Nor held as worth communion of thine own,
Except in her be found some fault alone
To blemish our alliance.' Then replied
Tristram, 'Nor blame nor scorn may touch my bride,
Albeit unknown of love she live, and be
Worth a man worthier than her love thought me.

Faith only, faith withheld me, faith forbade
The blameless grace wherewith love's grace makes glad
All lives linked else in wedlock; not that less
I loved the sweet light of her loveliness,
But that my love toward faith was more: and thou,
Albeit thine heart be keen against me now,
Couldst thou behold my very lady, then
No more of thee than of all other men
Should this my faith be held a faithless fault.'
And ere that day their hawking came to halt
Being sore of him entreated for a sign,
He sware to bring his brother Ganhardine
To sight of that strange Iseult: and thereon
Forth soon for Cornwall are these brethren gone,
Even to that royal pleasance where the hunt
Rang ever of old with Tristram's horn in front
Blithe as the queen's horse bounded at his side:
And first of all her dames forth pranced in pride
That day before them, with a ringing rein
All golden-glad, the king's false bride Brangwain,
The queen's true handmaid ever: and on her
Glancing, 'Be called for all time truth-teller,
O Tristram, of all true men's tongues alive,'
Quoth Ganhardine; 'for may my soul so thrive
As yet mine eye drank never sight like this.'
'Ay?' Tristram said, 'and she thou look'st on is
So great in grace of goodliness, that thou
Hast less thought left of wrath against me now,
Seeing but my lady's handmaid? Nay, behold;
See'st thou no light more golden than of gold
Shine where she moves in midst of all, above
All, past all price or praise or prayer of love?
Lo, this is she.' But as one mazed with wine
Stood, stunned in spirit and stricken, Ganhardine,
And gazed out hard against them: and his heart
As with a sword was cloven, and rent apart
As with strong fangs of fire; and scarce he spake,
Saying how his life for even a handmaid's sake
Was made a flame within him. And the knight
Bade him, being known of none that stood in sight,
Bear to Brangwain his ring, that she unseen
Might give in token privily to the queen
And send swift word where under moon or sun
They twain might yet be no more twain but one.
And that same night, under the stars that rolled
Over their warm deep wildwood nights of old
Whose hours for grains of sand shed sparks of fire,
Such way was made anew for their desire
By secret wile of sickness feigned, to keep
The king far off her vigils or her sleep,
That in the queen's pavilion midway set
By glimmering moondawn were those lovers met,
And Ganhardine of Brangwain gat him grace.
And in some passionate soft interspace
Between two swells of passion, when their lips
Breathed, and made room for such brief speech as slips
From tongues athirst with draughts of amorous wine
That leaves them thirstier than the salt sea's brine,
Was counsel taken how to fly, and where
Find covert from the wide world's ravening air
That hunts with storm the feet of nights and days
Through strange thwart lines of life and flowerless ways.
Then said Iseult: 'Lo, now the chance is here
Foreshown me late by word of Guenevere,
To give me comfort of thy rumoured wrong,
My traitor Tristram, when report was strong
Of me forsaken and thine heart estranged:
Nor should her sweet soul toward me yet be changed
Nor all her love lie barren, if mine hand
Crave harvest of it from the flowering land.
See therefore if this counsel please thee not,
That we take horse in haste for Camelot
And seek that friendship of her plighted troth
Which love shall be full fain to lend, nor loth
Shall my love be to take it.' So next night
The multitudinous stars laughed round their flight,
Fulfilling far with laughter made of light
The encircling deeps of heaven: and in brief space
At Camelot their long love gat them grace

Of those fair twain whose heads men's praise impearled
As love's two lordliest lovers in the world:
And thence as guests for harbourage past they forth
To win this noblest hold of all the north.
Far by wild ways and many days they rode,
Till clear across June's kingliest sunset glowed
The great round girth of goodly wall that showed
Where for one clear sweet season's length should be
Their place of strength to rest in, fain and free,
By the utmost margin of the loud lone sea.
And now, O Love, what comfort? God most high,
Whose love is as a flower's to live and die,
Whose light is everlasting: Lord, whose breath
Speaks music through the deathless lips of death
Whereto time's heart rings answer: Bard, whom time
Hears, and is vanquished with a wandering rhyme
That once thy lips made fragrant: Seer, whose sooth
Joy knows not well, but sorrow knows for truth,
Being priestess of thy soothsayings: Love, what grace
Shall these twain find at last before thy face?
This many a year they have served thee, and deserved,
If ever man might yet of all that served,
Since the first heartbeat bade the first man's knee
Bend, and his mouth take music, praising thee,
Some comfort; and some honey indeed of thine
Thou hast mixed for these with life's most bitter wine
Commending to their passionate lips a draught
No deadlier than thy chosen of old have quaffed
And blessed thine hand, their cupbearer's: for not
On all men comes the grace that seals their lot
As holier in thy sight, for all these feuds
That rend it, than the light-souled multitude's.
Nor thwarted of thine hand nor blessed; but these
Shall see no twilight, Love, nor fade at ease,
Grey-grown and careless of desired delight,
But lie down tired and sleep before the night.
These shall not live till time or change may chill
Or doubt divide or shame subdue their will,
Or fear or slow repentance work them wrong,
Or love die first: these shall not live so long.
Death shall not take them drained of dear true life
Already, sick or stagnant from the strife,
Quenched: not with dry-drawn veins and lingering breath
Shall these through crumbling hours crouch down to death.
Swift, with one strong clean leap, ere life's pulse tire,
Most like the leap of lions or of fire,
Sheer death shall bound upon them: one pang past,
The first keen sense of him shall be their last,
Their last shall be no sense of any fear,
More than their life had sense of anguish here.
Weeks and light months had fled at swallow's speed
Since here their first hour sowed for them the seed
Of many sweet as rest or hope could be;
Since on the blown beach of a glad new sea
Wherein strange rocks like fighting men stand scarred
They saw the strength and help of Joyous Gard.
Within the full deep glorious tower that stands
Between the wild sea and the broad wild lands
Love led and gave them quiet: and they drew
Life like a God's life in each wind that blew,
And took their rest, and triumphed. Day by day
The mighty moorlands and the sea-walls grey,
The brown bright waters of green fells that sing
One song to rocks and flowers and birds on wing,
Beheld the joy and glory that they had,
Passing, and how the whole world made them glad,
And their great love was mixed with all things great,
As life being lovely, and yet being strong like fate.

For when the sun sprang on the sudden sea
Their eyes sprang eastward, and the day to be
Was lit in them untimely : such delight
They took yet of the clear cold breath and light
That goes before the morning, and such grace
Was deathless in them through their whole life's space
As dies in many with their dawn that dies
And leaves in pulseless hearts and flameless eyes
No light to lighten and no tear to weep
For youth's high joy that time has cast on sleep.
Yea, this old grace and height of joy they had,
To lose no jot all that made them glad
And filled their springs of spirit with such fire
That all delight fed in them all desire ;
And no whit less than in their first keen crime
The spring's breath blew through all their summer time,
And in their skies would sunlike Love confuse
Clear April colours with hot August hues,
And in their hearts one light of sun and moon
Reigned, and the morning died not of the noon :
Such might of life was in them, and so high
Their heart of love rose higher than fate could fly.
And many a large delight of hawk and hound
The great glad land that knows no bourne or bound,
Save the wind's own and the outer sea-bank's, gave
Their days for comfort ; many a long blithe wave
Buoyed their blithe bark between the bare bald rocks,
Deep, steep, and still, save for the swift free flocks
Unshepherded, uncompassed, unconfined,
That when blown foam keeps all the loud air blind
Mix with the wind's their triumph, and partake
The joy of blasts that ravin, waves that break,
All round and all below their mustering wings,
A clanging cloud that round the cliff's edge clings
On each bleak bluff breaking the strenuous tides
That rings reverberate mirth when storm bestrides
The subject night in thunder : many a noon
They took the moorland's or the bright sea's boon
With all their hearts into their spirit of sense,
Rejoicing, where the sudden dells grew dense
With sharp thick flight of hillside birds, or where
On some strait rock's ledge in the intense mute air
Erect against the cliff's sheer sunlit white
Blue as the clear north heaven, clothed warm with light,
Stood neck to bended neck and wing to wing
With heads fast hidden under, close as cling
Flowers on one flowering almond-branch in spring,
Three herons deep asleep against the sun,
Each with one bright foot downward poised, and one
Wing-hidden hard by the bright head, and all
Still as fair shapes fixed on some wondrous wall
Of minster-aisle or cloister-close or hall
To take even time's eye prisoner with delight.
Or, satisfied with joy of sound and sight,
They sat and communed of things past : what state
King Arthur, yet unwarred upon by fate,
Held high in hall at Camelot, like one
Whose lordly life was as the mounting sun
That climbs and pauses on the point of noon,
Sovereign : how royal rang the tourney's tune
Through Tristram's three days' triumph, spear to spear,
When Iseult shone enthroned by Guenevere,
Rose against rose, the highest adored on earth,
Imperial : yet with subtle notes of mirth
Would she bemock her praises, and bemoan
Her glory by that splendour overthrown
Which lightened from her sister's eyes elate ;
Saying how by night a little light seems great,
But less than least of all things, very nought,
When dawn undoes the web that darkness wrought ;
How like a tower of ivory well designed
By subtlest hand subserving subtlest mind,
Ivory with flower of rose incarnadined
And kindling with some God therein revealed,
A light for grief to look on and be healed,
Stood Guenevere : and all beholding her
Were heartstruck even as earth at midsummer
With burning wonder, hardly to be borne.
So was that amorous glorious lady born,

A fiery memory for all storied years :
Nor might men call her sisters crowned her peers,
Her sister queens, put all by her to scorn :
She had such eyes as are not made to mourn ;
But in her own a gleaming ghost of tears
Shone, and their glance was slower than Guenevere's,
And fitfuller with fancies grown of grief ;
Shamed as a Mayflower shames an autumn leaf
Full well she wist it could not choose but be
If in that other's eyeshot standing she
Should lift her looks up ever : wherewithal
Like fires whose light fills heaven with festival
Flamed her eyes full on Tristram's ; and he laughed.
Answering, 'What wile of sweet child-hearted craft
That children forge for children, to beguile
Eyes known of them not witless of the wile
But fain to seem for sport's sake self-deceived,
Wilt thou find out now not to be believed ?
Or how shall I trust more than ouphe or elf
Thy truth to me-ward, who beliest thyself ?'
'Nor elf nor ouphe or aught of airier kind,'
Quoth she, 'though made of moonbeams moist and blind.
Is light if weighed with man's winged weightless mind.
Though thou keep somewise troth with me, God wot,
When thou didst wed, I doubt, thou thoughtest not
So charily to keep it.' 'Nay,' said he,
'Yet am not I rebukable by thee
As Launcelot, erring, held me ere he wist
No mouth save thine of mine was ever kissed
Save as a sister's only, since we twain
Drank first the draught assigned our lips to drain
That Fate and Love with darkling hands commixt
Poured, and no power to part them came betwixt,
But either's will, howbeit they seem at strife,
Was toward us one, as death itself and life
Are one sole doom toward all men, nor may one
Behold not darkness, who beholds the sun.'
'Ah, then,' she said, 'what word is this men hear
Of Merlin, how some doom too strange to fear
Was cast but late about him oversea,
Sweet recreant, in thy bridal Brittany ?
Is not his life sealed fast on him with sleep,
By witchcraft of his own and love's, to keep
Till earth be fire and ashes ?'
'Surely,' said
Her lover, 'not as one alive or dead
The great good wizard, well beloved and well
Predestinate of heaven that casts out hell
For guerdon gentler far than all men's fate,
Exempt alone of all predestinate,
Takes his strange rest at heart of slumberland,
More deep asleep in green Broceliande
Than shipwrecked sleepers in the soft green sea
Beneath the weight of wandering waves : but he
Hath for those roofing waters overhead
Above him always all the summer spread
Or all the winter wailing : or the sweet
Late leaves marked red with autumn's burning feet,
Or withered with his weeping, round the seer
Rain, and he sees not, nor may heed or hear
The witness of the winter : but in spring
He hears above him all the winds on wing
Through the blue dawn between the brightening boughs,
And on shut eyes and slumber-smitten brows
Feels ambient change in the air and strengthening sun,
And knows the soul that was his soul at one
With the ardent world's, and in the spirit of earth
His spirit of life reborn to mightier birth
And mixed with things of elder life than ours ;
With cries of birds, and kindling lamps of flowers,
And sweep and song of winds, and fruitful light
Of sunbeams, and the far faint breath of night,
And waves and woods at morning : and in all,
Soft as at noon the slow sea's rise and fall,
He hears in spirit a song that none but he
Hears from the mystic mouth of Nimue
Shed like a consecration ; and his heart,
Hearing, is made for love's sake as a part
Of that far singing, and the life thereof
Part of that life that feeds the world with love :
Yea, heart in heart is molten, hers and his,
Into the world's heart and the soul that is
Beyond or sense or vision ; and their breath
Stirs the soft springs of deathless life and death,

Death that bears life, and change that brings forth seed
Of life to death and death to life indeed,
As blood recircling through the unsounded veins
Of earth and heaven with all their joys and pains.
Ah, that when love shall laugh no more nor weep
We too, we too might hear that song and sleep!'
'Yea,' said Iseult, 'some joy it were to be
Lost in the sun's light and the all-girdling sea,
Mixed with the winds and woodlands, and to bear
Part in the large life of the quickening air,
And the sweet earth's, our mother: yet to pass
More fleet than mirrored faces from the glass
Out of all pain and all delight, so far
That love should seem but as the furthest star
Sunk deep in trembling heaven, scarce seen or known,
As a dead moon forgotten, once that shone
Where now the sun shines—nay, not all things yet,
Not all things always, dying, would I forget.'
And Tristram answered amorously, and said:
'O heart that here art mine, O heavenliest head
That ever took men's worship here, which art
Mine, how shall death put out the fire at heart,
Quench in men's eyes the head's remembered light
That time shall set but higher in more men's sight?
Think thou not much to die one earthly day,
Being made not in their mould who pass away
Nor who shall pass for ever.'
'Ah,' she said,
'What shall it profit me, being praised and dead?
What profit have the flowers of all men's praise?
What pleasure of our pleasure have the days
That pour on us delight of life and mirth?
What fruit of all our joy on earth has earth?
Nor am I—nay, my lover, am I one
To take such part in heaven's enkindling sun
And in the inviolate air and sacred sea
As clothes with grace that wondrous Nimue?
For all her works are bounties, all her deeds
Blessings; her days are scrolls wherein love reads
The record of his mercies: heaven above
Hath not more heavenly holiness of love
Than earth beneath, wherever pass or pause
Her feet that move not save by love's own laws,
In gentleness of godlike wayfaring
To heal men's hearts as earth is healed by spring
Of all such woes as winter: what am I,
Love, that have strength but to desire and die,
That have but grace to love and do thee wrong,
What am I that my name should live so long,
Save as the star that crossed thy star-struck lot,
With hers whose light was life to Launcelot?
Life gave she him, and strength, and fame to be
For ever: I, what gift can I give thee?
Peril and sleepless watches, fearful breath
Of dread more bitter for my sake than death
When death came nigh to call me by my name,
Exile, rebuke, remorse, and—O, not shame.
Shame only, this I gave thee not, whom none
May give that worst thing ever—no, not one.
Of all that hate, all hateful hearts that see
Darkness for light and hate where love should be,
None for my shame's sake may speak shame of thee.'
And Tristram answering ere he kissed her, smiled:
'O very woman, god at once and child,
What ails thee to desire of me once more
The assurance that thou hadst in heart before?
For all this wild sweet waste of sweet vain breath,
Thou knowest I know thou hast given me life, not death.
The shadow of death, informed with shows of strife,
Was ere I won thee all I had of life.
Light war, light love, light living, dreams in sleep,
Joy slight and light, not glad enough to weep,
Filled up my foolish days with sound and shine.
Vision and gleam from strange men's cast on mine.
Reverberate light from eyes presaging thine
That shed but shadowy moonlight where thy face
Now sheds forth sunshine in the deep same place,

The deep live heart half dead and shallower then
Than summer fords which thwart not wandering men.
For how should I, signed sorrow's from my birth,
Kiss dumb the loud red laughing lips of mirth?
Or how, sealed thine to be, love less than heaven on earth?
My heart in me was held at restless rest,
Presageful of some prize beyond its quest,
Prophetic still with promise, fain to find the best.
For one was fond and one was blithe and one
Fairer than all save twain whose peers are none;
For third on earth is none that heaven hath seen
To stand with Guenevere beside my queen.
Not Nimue, girt with blessing as a guard:
Not the soft lures and laughters of Ettarde:
Not she, that splendour girdled round with gloom,
Crowned as with iron darkness of the tomb,
And clothed with clouding conscience of a monstrous doom,
Whose blind incestuous love brought forth a fire
To burn her ere it burn its darkling sire,
Her mother's son, King Arthur: yet but late
We saw pass by that fair live shadow of fate,
The queen Morgause of Orkney, like a dream
That scares the night when moon and starry beam
Sicken and swoon before some sorcerer's eyes
Whose wordless charms defile the saintly skies,
Bright still with fire and pulse of blood and breath,
Whom her own sons have doomed for shame to death.'
'Death—yea,' quoth she, 'there is not said or heard
So oft aloud on earth so sure a word.
Death, and again death, and for each that saith
Ten tongues chime answer to the sound of death.
Good end God send us ever—so men pray.
But I—this end God send me, would I say,
To die not of division and a heart
Rent or with sword of severance cloven apart,
But only when thou diest and only where thou art,
O thou my soul and spirit and breath to me,
O light, life, love! yea, let this only be,
That dying I may praise God who gave me thee,
Let hap what will thereafter.'
So that day
They communed, even till even was worn away,
Nor aught they said seemed strange or sad to say,
But sweet as night's dim dawn to weariness.
Nor loved they life or love for death's sake less,
Nor feared they death for love's or life's sake more.
And on the sounding soft funereal shore
They, watching till the day should wholly die,
Saw the far sea sweep to the far grey sky,
Saw the long sands sweep to the long grey sea.
And night made one sweet mist of moor and lea.
And only far off shore the foam gave light.
And life in them sank silent as the night.

VII.

THE WIFE'S VIGIL.

But all that year in Brittany forlorn,
More sick at heart with wrath than fear of scorn
And less in love with love than grief, and less
With grief than pride of spirit and bitterness.

Till all the sweet life of her blood was changed
And all her soul from all her past estranged
And all her will with all itself at strife
And all her mind at war with all her life,
Dwelt the white-handed Iseult, maid and wife,
A mourner that for mourning robes had on
Anger and doubt and hate of things foregone.
For that sweet spirit of old which made her sweet
Was parched with blasts of thought as flowers with heat
And withered as with wind of evil will ;
Though slower than frosts or fires consume or kill
That bleak black wind vexed all her spirit still.
As ripples reddening in the roughening breath
Of the eager east when dawn does night to death,
So rose and stirred and kindled in her thought
Fierce barren fluctuant fires that lit not aught,
But scorched her soul with yearning keen as hate
And dreams that left her wrath disconsolate.
When change came first on that first heaven where all
Life's hours were flowers that dawn's light hand let fall,
The sun that smote her dewy cloud of days
Wrought from its showery folds his rainbow's rays,
For love the red, for hope the gentle green,
But yellow jealousy glared pale between.
Ere yet the sky grew heavier, and her head
Bent flowerwise, chill with change and fancies fled,
She saw but love arch all her heaven across with red,
A burning bloom that seemed to breathe and beat
And waver only as flame with rapturous heat
Wavers ; and all the world therewith smelt sweet,
As incense kindling from the rose-red flame
And when that full flush waned, and love became
Scarce fainter, though his fading horoscope
From certitude of sight receded, hope
Held yet her April-coloured light aloft
As though to lure back love, a lamp sublime and soft.
But soon that light paled as a leaf grows pale
And fluttered leaf-like in the gathering gale
And melted even as dew-flakes, whose brief sheen
The sun that gave despoils of glittering green ;
Till harder shone 'twixt hope and love grown cold
A sallow light like withering autumn's gold,
The pale strong flame of jealous thought, that glows
More deep than hope's green bloom or love's enkindled rose :
As though the sunflower's faint fierce disk absorbed
The spirit and heart of starrier flowers disorbed.
That same full hour of twilight's doors unbarred
To let bright night behold in Joyous Gard
The glad grave eyes of lovers far away
Watch with sweet thoughts of death the death of day
Saw lonelier by the narrower opening sea
Sit fixed at watch Iseult of Brittany.
As darkness from deep valleys void and bleak
Climbs till it clothe with night the sunniest peak
Where only of all a mystic mountain-land
Day seems to cling yet with a trembling hand
And yielding heart reluctant to recede,
So, till her soul was clothed with night indeed,
Rose the slow cloud of envious will within
And hardening hate that held itself no sin,
Veiled heads of vision, eyes of evil gleam,
Dim thought on thought, and darkling dream on dream.
Far off she saw in spirit, and seeing abhorred,
The likeness wrought on darkness of her lord
Shine, and the imperial semblance at his side
Whose shadow from her seat cast down the bride,
Whose power and ghostly presence thrust her forth :
Beside that unknown other sea far north
She saw them, clearer than in present sight
Rose on her eyes the starry shadow of night ;
And on her heart that heaved with gathering fate
Rose red with storm the starless shadow of hate ;
And eyes and heart made one saw surge and swell
The fires of sunset like the fires of hell.

As though God's wrath would burn up sin
with shame,
The incensed red gold of deepening heaven
grew flame:
The sweet green spaces of the soft low sky
Faded, as fields that withering wind leaves
dry:
The sea's was like a doomsman's blasting
breath
From lips afoam with ravenous lust of death.
A night like desolation, sombre-starred,
Above the great walled girth of Joyous Gard
Spread forth its wide sad strength of shadow
and gloom
Wherein those twain were compassed round
with doom:
Hell from beneath called on them, and she
heard
Reverberate judgment in the wild wind's word
Cry, till the sole sound of their names that
rang
Clove all the sea-mist with a clarion's clang,
And clouds to clouds and flames to clustering
flames
Beat back the dark noise of the direful names.
Fear and strong exultation caught her breath,
And triumph like the bitterness of death,
And rapture like the rage of hate allayed
With ruin and ravin that its might hath
made;
And her heart swelled and strained itself to
hear
What may be heard of no man's hungering
ear,
And as a soil that cleaves in twain for drouth
Thirsted for judgment given of God's own
mouth
Against them, till the strength of dark desire
Was in her as a flame of hell's own fire.
Nor seemed the wrath which held her spirit
in stress
Aught else or worse than passionate holiness,
Nor the ardent hate which called on judg-
ment's rod
More hateful than the righteousness of God.
'How long, till thou do justice, and my wrong
Stand expiate? O long-suffering judge, how
long?
Shalt thou not put him in mine hand one day
Whom I so loved, to spare not but to slay?
Shalt thou not cast her down for me to tread,
Me, on the pale pride of her humbled head?
Do I not well, being angry? doth not hell
Require them? yea, thou knowest that I do
well.
Is not thy seal there set of bloodred light
For witness on the brows of day and night?
Who shall unseal it? what shall melt away
Thy signet from the doors of night and day?
No man, nor strength of any spirit above,
No prayer, nor ardours of adulterous love.
Thou art God, the strong lord over body and
soul:
Hast thou not in the terrors of thy scroll
All names of all men written as with fire?
Thine only breath bids time and space re
spire:
And are not all things evil in them done
More clear in thine eyes than in ours the sun?
Hast thou not sight stretched wide enough to
see
These that offend it, these at once and me?
Is thine arm shortened or thine hand struck
down
As palsied? have thy brows not strength to
frown?
Are thine eyes blind with film of withering
age?
Burns not thine heart with righteousness of
rage
Yet, and the royal rancour toward thy foes
Retributive of ruin? Time should close,
Thou said'st, and earth fade as a leaf grows
grey,
Ere one word said of thine should pass away.
Was this then not thy word, thou God most
high,
That sin shall surely bring forth death and
die,
Seeing how these twain live and have joy of
life,
His harlot and the man that made me wife
For is it I, perchance, I that have sinned?
Me, peradventure, should thy wasting wind
Smite, and thy sun blast, and thy storms de-
vour
Me with keen fangs of lightning? should thy
power
Put forth on me the weight of its awakening
hour?
Shall I that bear this burden bear that weight
Of judgment? is my sin against thee great,
If all my heart against them burn with all its
hate?
Thine, and not mine, should hate be? nay,
but me
They have spoiled and scoffed at, who can
touch not thee.
Me, me, the fullness of their joy drains dry,
Their fruitfulness makes barren: thou, not I,

Lord, is it, whom their wrongdoing clothes with shame,
That all who speak shoot tongues out at thy name
As all who hear mock mine? Make me thy sword
At least, if even thou too be wronged, O Lord,
At all of these that wrong me: make mine hand
As lightning, or my tongue a fiery brand,
To burn or smite them with thy wrath: behold,
I have nought on earth save thee for hope or hold,
Fail me not thou: I have nought but this to crave,
Make me thy mean to give them to the grave,
Thy sign that all men seeing may speak thee just,
Thy word which turns the strengths of sin to dust,
Thy blast which burns up towers and thrones with fire.
Lord, is this gift, this grace that I require,
So great a gift, Lord, for thy grace to give
And bid me bear thy part retributive?
That I whom scorn makes mouths at, I might be
Thy witness if loud sin may mock at thee?
For lo, my life is as a barren ear
Plucked from the sheaf: dark days drive past me here
Downtrodden, while joy's reapers pile their sheaves,
A thing more vile than autumn's weariest leaves,
For these the sun filled once with sap of life.
O thou my lord that hadst me to thy wife,
Dost thou not fear at all, remembering me,
The love that bowed my whole soul down to thee?
Is this so wholly nought for man to dread,
Man, whose life walks between the quick and dead,
Naked, and warred about with wind and sea,
That one should love and hate as I do thee?
That one should live in all the world his foe
So mortal as the hate that loves him so?
Nought, is it nought, O husband, O my knight,
O strong man, and indomitable in fight,
That one more weak than foam-bells on the sea
Should have in heart such thoughts as I of thee?
Thou art bound about with stately strengths for bands:
What strength shall keep thee from my strengthless hands?
Thou art girt about with goodly guards and great:
What fosse may fence thee round as deep as hate?
Thou art wise: will wisdom teach thee fear of me?
Thou art great of heart: shall this deliver thee?
What wall so massive, or what tower so high,
Shall be thy surety that thou shouldst not die,
If that which comes against thee be but I?
Who shall rise up of power to take thy part,
What skill find strength to save, what strength find art,
If that which wars against thee be my heart?
Not iron, nor the might of force afield,
Nor edge of sword, nor sheltering weight of shield,
Nor all thy fame since all thy praise began,
Nor all the love and laud thou hast of man,
Nor, though his noiseless hours with wool be shod,
Shall God's love keep thee from the wrath of God.
O son of sorrows, hast thou said at heart,
Haply, God loves thee, God shall take thy part,
Who hath all these years endured thee, since thy birth
From sorrow's womb bade sin be born on earth?
So long he hath cast his buckler over thee,
Shall he not surely guard thee even from me?
Yea, but if yet he give thee while I live
Into mine hands as he shall surely give,
Ere death at last bring darkness on thy face,
Call then on him, call not on me for grace,
Cast not away one prayer, one suppliant breath,
On me that commune all this while with death.
For I that was not and that was thy wife
Desire not but one hour of all thy life

Wherein to triumph till that hour be past;
But this mine hour I look for is thy last.'
So mused she till the fire in sea and sky
Sank, and the northwest wind spake harsh on high,
And like the sea's heart waxed her heart that heard,
Strong, dark, and bitter. till the keen wind's word
Seemed of her own soul spoken, and the breath
All round her not of darkness, but of death.

VIII.

THE LAST PILGRIMAGE.

ENOUGH of ease, O Love, enough of light,
Enough of rest before the shadow of night.
Strong Love, whom death finds feebler; kingly Love,
Whom time discrowns in season, seeing thy dove
Spell-stricken by the serpent; for thy sake
These that saw light see night's dawn only break,
Night's cup filled up with slumber, whence men think to drink.
The draught more dread than thine was dire
O Love, thy day sets darkling: hope and fear
Fall from thee standing stern as death stands here.
For what have these to do with fear or hope
On whom the gates of outer darkness ope,
On whom the door of life's desire is barred?
Past like a cloud their days in Joyous Gard
Gleam like a cloud the westering sun stains red
Till all the blood of day's blithe heart be bled
And all night's heart requickened; in their eyes
So flame and fade those far memorial skies,
So shines the moorland, so revives the sea,
Whereon they gazing mused of things to be
And wist not more of them than waters know
What wind with next day's change of tide shall blow.
Dark roll the deepening days whose waves divide
Unseasonably, with storm-struck change of tide.
Tristram from Iseult: nor may sorrow say
If better wind shall blow than yesterday
With next day risen or any day to come.
For ere the songs of summer's death fell dumb,
And autumn bade the imperial moorlands change
Their purples, and the bracken's bloom grow strange
As hope's green blossom touched with time's harsh rust,
Was all their joy of life shaken to dust,
And all its fires made ashes: by the strand
Where late they strayed and communed hand from hand
For the last time fell separate, eyes of eyes
Took for the last time leave, and saw the skies
Dark with their deep division. The last time—
The last that ever love's rekindling rhyme
Should keep for them life's days and nights in tune
With refluence of the morning and the moon
Alternative in music, and make one
The secrets of the stardawn and the sun
For these twain souls ere darkness held them fast;
The last before the labour marked for last
And toil of utmost knighthood, till the wage
Of rest might crown his crowning pilgrimage
Whereon forth faring must he take farewell,
With spear for staff and sword for scallop shell
And scrip wherein close memory hoarded yet
Things holier held than death might well forget;
The last time ere the travel were begun
Whose goal is unbeholden of the sun,
The last wherewith love's eyes might yet be lit,
Came, and they could but dream they knew not it.
For Tristram parting from her wist at heart
How well she wist they might not choose but part,

And he pass forth a pilgrim, when there came
A sound of summons in the high king's name
For succour toward his vassal Triamour,
King in wild Wales, now spoiled of all his power,
As Tristram's father ere his fair son's birth,
By one the strongest of the sons of earth,
Urgan, an iron bulk of giant mould :
And Iseult in Tintagel as of old
Sat crowned with state and sorrow : for her lord
At Arthur's hand required her back restored,
And willingly compelled against her will
She yielded, saying within her own soul still
Some season yet of soft or stormier breath
Should haply give her life again or death :
For now nor quick nor dead nor bright nor dark
Were all her nights and days wherein King Mark
Held haggard watch upon her, and his eyes
Were cloudier than the gradual wintering skies
That closed about the wan wild land and sea.
And bitter toward him waxed her heart : but he
Was rent in twain betwixt harsh love and hate
With pain and passion half compassionate
That yearned and laboured to be quit of shame,
And could not : and his life grew smouldering flame,
And hers a cloud full-charged with storm and shower,
Though touched with trembling gleams of fire's bright flower
That flashed and faded on its fitful verge,
As hope would strive with darkness and emerge
And sink, a swimmer strangled by the swallowing surge.
But Tristram by dense hills and deepening vales
Rode through the wild glad wastes of glorious Wales,
High-hearted with desire of happy fight
And strong in soul with merrier sense of might
Than since the fair first years that hailed him knight :
For all his will was toward the war, so long
Had love repressed and wrought his glory wrong,
So far the triumph and so fair the praise
Seemed now that kindled all his April days.
And here in bright blown autumn, while his life
Was summer's yet for strength toward love or strife,
Blithe waxed his hope toward battle, and high desire
To pluck once more as out of circling fire
Fame, the broad flower whose breath makes death more sweet
Than roses crushed by love's receding feet.
But all the lovely land wherein he went
The blast of ruin and ravenous war had rent ;
And black with fire the fields where homesteads were,
And foul with festering dead the high soft air
And loud with wail of women many a stream
Whose own live song was like love's deepening dream,
Spake all against the spoiler : wherefore still
Wrath waxed with pity, quickening all his will,
In Tristram's heart for every league he rode
Through the aching land so broad a curse bestrode
With so supreme a shadow : till one dawn,
Above the green bloom of a gleaming lawn,
High on the strait steep windy bridge that spanned
A glen's deep mouth, he saw that shadow stand
Visible, sword on thigh and mace in hand
Vast as the mid bulk of a roof-tree's beam.
So, sheer above the wild wolf-haunted stream,
Dire as the face disfeatured of a dream,
Rose Urgan : and his eyes were night and flame ;
But like the fiery dawn were his that came
Against him, lit with more sublime desire
Than lifts toward heaven the leaping heart of fire :
And strong in vantage of his perilous place
The huge high presence, red as earth's first race,
Reared like a reed the might up of his mace.
And smote : but lightly Tristram swerved, and drove
Right in on him, whose void stroke only clove
Air, and fell wide, thundering athwart : and he
Sent forth a stormier cry than wind or sea
When midnight takes the tempest for her lord ;
And all the glen's throat seemed as hell's that roared ;
But high like heaven's light over hell shone Tristram's sword,

Falling, and bright as storm shows God's bare brand
Flashed as it shore sheer off the huge right hand
Whose strength was as the shadow of death on all that land.
And like the trunk of some green tree sawn through
Reeled Urgan, as his left hand grasped and drew
A steel by sorcerers tempered: and anew
Raged the red wind of fluctuant fight, till all
The cliffs were thrilled as by the clangorous call
Of storm's blown trumpets from the core of night,
Charging: and even as with the storm-wind's might
On Tristram's helm that sword crashed: and the knight
Fell, and his arms clashed, and a wild cry brake
From those far off that heard it, for his sake
Soul-stricken: and that bulk of monstrous birth
Sent forth again a cry more dire for mirth:
But ere the sunbright arms were soiled of earth
They flashed again, re-risen: and swift and loud
Rang the strokes out as from a circling cloud,
So dense the dust wrought over them its drifted shroud.
Strong strokes, within the mist their battle made,
Each hailed on other through the shifting shade
That clung about them hurtling as the swift fight swayed:
And each between the jointed corslet saw
Break forth his foe's bright blood at each grim flaw
Steel made in hammered iron: till again
The fiend put forth his might more strong for pain
And cleft the great knight's glittering shield in twain,
Laughing for very wrath and thirst to kill,
A beast's broad laugh of blind and wolfish will,
And smote again ere Tristram's lips drew breath
Panting, and swept as by the sense of death,
That surely should have touched and sealed them fast
Save that the sheer stroke shrilled aside, and passed
Frustrate: but answering Tristram smote anew,
And thrust the brute breast as with lightning through
Clean with one cleaving stroke of perfect might:
And violently the vast bulk leapt upright,
And plunged over the bridge, and fell: and all
The cliffs reverberate from his monstrous fall
Rang: and the land by Tristram's grace was free.
So with high laud and honour thence went he,
And southward set his sail again, and passed
The lone land's ending, first beheld and last
Of eyes that look on England from the sea:
And his heart mourned within him, knowing how she
Whose heart with his was fatefully made fast
Sat now fast bound, as though some charm were cast
About her, such a brief space eastward thence,
And yet might soul not break the bonds of sense
And bring her to him in very life and breath
More than had this been even the sea of death
That washed between them, and its wide sweet light
The dim strait's darkness of the narrowing night
That shuts about men dying whose souls put forth
To pierce its passage through; but south and north
Alike for him were other than they were:
For all the northward coast shone smooth and fair,
And off its iron cliffs the keen-edged air
Blew summer, kindling from her mute bright mouth;
But winter breathed out of the murmuring south,
Where, pale with wrathful watch on passing ships,
The lone wife lay in wait with wan dumb lips.
Yet, sailing where the shoreward ripple curled
Of the most wild sweet waves in all the world,
His soul took comfort even for joy to see
The strong deep joy of living sun and sea,

The large deep love of living sea and land,
As past the lonely lion-guarded strand
Where that huge warder lifts his couchant sides,
Asleep, above the sleepless lapse of tides,
The light sail swept, and past the unsounded caves
Unsearchable, wherein the pulse of waves
Throbs through perpetual darkness to and fro,
And the blind night swims heavily below
While heavily the strong noon broods above,
Even to the very bay whence very Love,
Strong daughter of the giant gods who wrought
Sun, earth, and sea out of their procreant thought,
Most meetly might have risen, and most divine
Beheld and heard things round her sound and shine
From floors of foam and gold to walls of serpentine.
For splendid as the limbs of that supreme
Incarnate beauty through men's visions gleam,
Whereof all fairest things are even but shadow or dream,
And lovely like as Love's own heavenliest face,
Gleams there and glows the presence and the grace
Even of the mother of all, in perfect pride of place.
For otherwhere beneath our world-wide sky
There may not be beheld of men that die
Aught else like this that dies not, nor may stress
Of ages that bow down men's works make less
The exultant awe that clothes with power its loveliness.
For who sets eye thereon soever knows
How since these rocks and waves first rolled and rose
The marvel of their many-coloured might
Hath borne this record sensible to sight,
The witness and the symbol of their own delight,
The gospel graven of life's most heavenly law.
Joy, brooding on its own still soul with awe,
A sense of godlike rest in godlike strife,
The sovereign conscience of the spirit of life.
Nor otherwhere on strand or mountain tower
Hath such fair beauty shining forth in flower
Put on the imperial robe of such imperious power.
For all the radiant rocks from depth to height
Burn with vast bloom of glories blossom-bright
As though the sun's own hand had thrilled them through with light
And stained them through with splendour; yet from thence
Such awe strikes rapture through the spirit of sense
From all the inaccessible sea-wall's girth,
That exultation, bright at heart as mirth,
Bows deeper down before the beauty of earth
Than fear may bow down ever: nor shall one
Who meets at Alpine dawn the mounting sun
On heights too high for many a wing to climb
Be touched with sense of aught seen more sublime
Than here smiles high and sweet in face of heaven and time.
For here the flower of fire, the soft hoar bloom
Of springtide olive-woods, the warm green gloom
Of clouded seas that swell and sound with dawn of doom,
The keen thwart lightning and the wan grey light
Of stormy sunrise crossed and vexed with night,
Flash, loom, and laugh with divers hues in one
From all the curved cliff's face, till day be done,
Against the sea's face and the gazing sun.
And whensoever a strong wave, high in hope,
Sweeps up some smooth slant breadth of stone aslope,
That glowed with duskier fire of hues less bright,
Swift as it sweeps back springs to sudden sight
The splendour of the moist rock's fervent light,
Fresh as from dew of birth when time was born
Out of the world-conceiving womb of morn.
All its quenched flames and darkling hues divine
Leap into lustrous life and laugh and shine
And darken into swift and dim decline
For one brief breath's space till the next wave run
Right up, and ripple down again, undone,
And leave it to be kissed and kindled of the sun,
And all these things, bright as they shone before
Man first set foot on earth or sail from shore,

Rose not less radiant than the sun sees now
When the autumn sea was cloven of Tristram's prow,
And strong in sorrow and hope and woful will
That hope might move not nor might sorrow kill
He held his way back toward the wild sad shore
Whence he should come to look on these no more,
Nor ever, save with sunless eyes shut fast,
Sail home to sleep in home-born earth at last.
And all these things fled fleet as light or breath
Past, and his heart waxed cold and dull as death,
Or swelled but as the tides of sorrow swell,
To sink with sullen sense of slow farewell.
So surely seemed the silence even to sigh
Assurance of inveterate prophecy,
'Thou shalt not come again home hither ere thou die.'
And the wind mourned and triumphed, and the sea
Wailed and took heart and trembled, nor might he
Hear more of comfort in their speech, or see
More certitude in all the waste world's range
Than the only certitude of death and change.
And as the sense and semblance fluctuated
Of all things heard and seen alive or dead
That smote far off upon his ears or eyes
Or memory mixed with forecasts fain to rise
And fancies faint as ghostliest prophecies,
So seemed his own soul, changefully forlorn,
To shrink and triumph and mount up and mourn.
Yet all its fitful waters, clothed with night,
Lost heart not wholly, lacked not wholly light,
Seeing over life and death one star in sight
Where evening's gates as fair as morning's ope,
Whose name was memory, but whose flame was hope.
For all the tides of thought that rose and sank
Felt its fair strength wherefrom strong sorrow shrank
A mightier trust than time could change or cloy,
More strong than sorrow, more secure than joy.
So came he, nor content nor all unblest,
Back to the grey old land of Merlin's rest.
But ere six paces forth on shore he trod
Before him stood a knight with feet unshod,
And kneeling called upon him, as on God
Might sick men call for pity, praying aloud
With hands held up and head made bare and bowed;
'Tristram, for God's love and thine own dear fame,
I Tristram that am one with thee in name
And one in heart with all that praise thee—I,
Most woful man of all that may not die
For heartbreak and the heavier scourge of shame,
By all thy glory done our woful name
Beseech thee, called of all men gentlest knight,
Be now not slow to do my sorrows right.
I charge thee for thy fame's sake through this land,
I pray thee by thine own wife's fair white hand,
Have pity of me whose love is borne away
By one that makes of poor men's lives his prey,
A felon masked with knighthood: at his side
Seven brethren hath he night or day to ride
With seven knights more that wait on all his will:
And here at hand ere yet one day fulfil
Its flight through light and darkness, shall they fare
Forth, and my bride among them, whom they bear
Through these wild lands his prisoner; and if now
I lose her, and my prayer be vain, and thou
Less fain to serve love's servants than of yore,
Then surely shall I see her face no more.
But if thou wilt, for love's sake of the bride
Who lay most loved of women at thy side,
Strike with me, straight then hence behoves us ride
And rest between the moorside and the sea
Where we may smite them passing: but for me
Poor stranger, me not worthy scarce to touch
Thy kind strong hand, how shouldst thou do so much?
For now lone left this long time waits thy wife
And lacks her lord and light of wedded life
Whilst thou far off art famous: yet thy fame,
If thou take pity on me that bear thy name
Unworthily, but by that name implore
Thy grace, how shall not even thy fame grow more?
But be thy will as God's among us done,
Who art far in fame above us as the sun:

Yet only of him have all men help and grace.'
And all the lordly light of Tristram's face
Was softened as the sun's in kindly spring.
'Nay, then may God send me as evil a thing
When I give ear not to such prayers,' he said,
'And make my place among the nameless dead
When I put back one hour the time to smite
And do the unrighteous griefs of good men right.
Behold, I will not enter in nor rest
Here in mine own halls till this piteous quest
Find end ere noon to-morrow: but do thou,
Whose sister's face I may not look on now,
Go, Ganhardine, with tiding of the vow
That bids me turn aside for one day's strife
Or live dishonoured all my days of life,
And greet for me in brother's wise my wife,
And crave her pardon that for knighthood's sake
And womanhood's, whose bands may no man break
And keep the bands of bounden honour fast,
I seek not her till two nights yet be past
And this my quest accomplished, so God please
By me to give this young man's anguish ease
And on his wrongdoer's head his wrong requite.'
And Tristram with that woful thankful knight
Rode by the seaside moorland wastes away
Between the quickening night and darkening day
Ere half the gathering stars had heart to shine.
And lightly toward his sister Ganhardine
Sped, where she sat and gazed alone afar
Above the grey sea for the sunset star,
And lightly kissed her hand and lightly spake
His tiding of that quest for knighthood's sake.
And the white-handed Iseult, bowing her head,
Gleamed on him with a glance athwart, and said:
'As God's on earth and far above the sun,
So toward his handmaid be my lord's will done.'
And doubts too dim to question or divine
Touched as with shade the spirit of Ganhardine,
Hearing; and scarce for half a doubtful breath
His bright light heart held half a thought of death
And knew not whence this darkling thought might be,
But surely not his sister's work: for she
Was ever sweet and good as summer air,
And soft as dew when all the night is fair,
And gracious as the golden maiden moon
When darkness craves her blessing: so full soon
His mind was light again as leaping waves,
Nor dreamed that hers was like a field of graves
Where no man's foot dare swerve to left or right,
Nor ear dares hearken, nor dares eye take sight
Of aught that moves and murmurs there at night.
But by the sea-banks where at morn their foes
Might find them, lay those knightly name-fellows,
One sick with grief of heart and sleepless, one
With heart of hope triumphant as the sun
Dreaming asleep of love and fame and fight:
But sleep at last wrapped warm the wan young knight;
And Tristram with the first pale windy light
Woke ere the sun spake summons, and his ear
Caught the sea's call that fired his heart to hear,
A noise of waking waters: for till dawn
The sea was silent as a mountain lawn
When the wind speaks not, and the pines are dumb,
And summer takes her fill ere autumn come
Of life more soft than slumber: but ere day
Rose, and the first beam smote the bounding bay,
Up sprang the strength of the dark East, and took
With its wide wings the waters as they shook,
And hurled them huddling on aheap, and cast
The full sea shoreward with a great glad blast,
Blown from the heart of morning: and with joy
Full-souled and perfect passion, as a boy
That leaps up light to wrestle with the sea
For pure heart's gladness and large ecstasy,
Up sprang the might of Tristram; and his soul
Yearned for delight within him, and waxed whole
As a young child's with rapture of the hour
That brought his spirit and all the world to flower,

And all the bright blood in his veins beat time
To the wind's clarion and the water's chime
That called him and he followed it and stood
On the sand's verge before the grey great flood
Where the white hurtling heads of waves that met
Rose unsaluted of the sunrise yet.
And from his heart's root outward shot the sweet
Strong joy that thrilled him to the hands and feet,
Filling his limbs with pleasure and glad might,
And his soul drank the immeasurable delight
That earth drinks in with morning, and the free
Limitless love that lifts the stirring sea
When on her bare bright bosom as a bride
She takes the young sun, perfect in his pride,
Home to his place with passion : and the heart
Trembled for joy within the man whose part
Was here not least in living : and his mind
Was rapt abroad beyond man's meaner kind
And pierced with love of all things and with mirth
Moved to make one with heaven and heaven-like earth
And with the light live water. So awhile
He watched the dim sea with a deepening smile,
And felt the sound and savour and swift flight
Of waves that fled beneath the fading night
And died before the darkness, like a song
With harps between and trumpets blown along
Through the loud air of some triumphant day,
Sink through his spirit and purge all sense away
Save of the glorious gladness of his hour
And all the world about to break in flower
Before the sovereign laughter of the sun ;
And he, ere night's wide work lay all undone,
As earth from her bright body casts off night,
Cast off his raiment for a rapturous fight
And stood between the sea's edge and the sea
Naked, and godlike of his mould as he
Whose swift foot's sound shook all the towers of Troy ;
So clothed with might, so girt upon with joy,
As, ere the knife had shorn to feed the fire
His glorious hair before the unkindled pyre
Whereon the half of his great heart was laid,
Stood, in the light of his live limbs arrayed,
Child of heroic earth and heavenly sea,
The flower of all men : scarce less bright than he,
If any of all men latter-born might stand,
Stood Tristram, silent, on the glimmering strand.
Not long : but with a cry of love that rang
As from a trumpet golden-mouthed, he sprang
As toward a mother's where his head might rest
Her child rejoicing, toward the strong sea's breast
That none may gird nor measure : and his heart
Sent forth a shout that bade his lips not part,
But triumphed in him silent : no man's voice,
No song, no sound of clarions that rejoice,
Can set that glory forth which fills with fire
The body and soul that have their whole desire
Silent, and freer than birds or dreams are free
Take all their will of all the encountering sea.
And toward the foam he bent and forward smote,
Laughing, and launched his body like a boat
Full to the sea-breach, and against the tide
Struck strongly forth with amorous arms made wide
To take the bright breast of the wave to his
And on his lips the sharp sweet minute's kiss
Given of the wave's lip for a breath's space curled
And pure as at the daydawn of the world.
And round him all the bright rough shuddering sea
Kindled, as though the world were even as he,
Heart-stung with exultation of desire ;
And all the life that moved him seemed to aspire,
As all the sea's life toward the sun : and still
Delight within him waxed with quickening will
More smooth and strong and perfect as a flame
That springs and spreads, till each glad limb became
A note of rapture in the tune of life,
Live music mild and keen as sleep and strife :
Till the sweet change that bids the sense grow sure
Of deeper depth and purity more pure
Wrapped him and lapped him round with clearer cold,
And all the rippling green grew royal gold

Between him and the far sun's rising rim.
And like the sun his heart rejoiced in him,
And brightened with a broadening flame of mirth :
And hardly seemed its life a part of earth,
But the life kindled of a fiery birth
And passion of a new-begotten son
Between the live sea and the living sun.
And mightier grew the joy to meet full-faced
Each wave, and mount with upward plunge, and taste
The rapture of its rolling strength, and cross
Its flickering crown of snows that flash and toss
Like plumes in battle's blithest charge, and thence
To match the next with yet more strenuous sense ;
Till on his eyes the light beat hard and bade
His face turn west and shoreward through the glad
Swift revel of the waters golden-clad,
And back with light reluctant heart he bore
Across the broad-backed rollers in to shore ;
Strong-spirited for the chance and cheer of fight,
And donned his arms again, and felt the might
In all his limbs rejoice for strength, and praised
God for such life as that whereon he gazed,
And wist not surely its joy was even as fleet
As that which laughed and lapsed against his feet,
The bright thin grey foam-blossom, glad and hoar,
That flings its flower along the flowerless shore
On sand or shingle, and still with sweet strange snows,
As where one great white storm-dishevelled rose
May rain her wild leaves on a windy land,
Strews for long leagues the sounding slope of strand,
And flower on flower falls flashing, and anew
A fresh light leaps up whence the last flash flew,
And cast its brief glad gleam of life away
To fade not flowerwise but as drops the day
Storm-smitten, when at once the dark devours
Heaven and the sea and earth with all their flowers ;
No star in heaven, on earth no rose to see,
But the white blown brief blossoms of the sea,
That make her green gloom starrier than the sky,
Dance yet before the tempest's tune, and die.
And all these things he glanced upon, and knew
How fair they shone, from earth's least flake of dew
To stretch of seas and imminence of skies,
Unwittingly, with unpresageful eyes,
For the last time. The world's half heavenly face,
The music of the silence of the place,
The confluence and the refluence of the sea,
The wind's note ringing over wold and lea,
Smote once more through him keen as fire that smote,
Rang once more through him one reverberate note,
That faded as he turned again and went,
Fulfilled by strenuous joy with strong content,
To take his last delight of labour done
That yet should be beholden of the sun
Or ever give man comfort of his hand.
Beside a wood's edge in the broken land
An hour at wait the twain together stood,
Till swift between the moorside and the wood
Flashed the spears forward of the coming train ;
And seeing beside the strong chief spoiler's rein
His wan love riding prisoner in the crew,
Forth with a cry the young man leapt, and flew
Right on that felon sudden as a flame ;
And hard at hand the mightier Tristram came,
Bright as the sun and terrible as fire :
And there had sword and spear their soul's desire,
And blood that quenched the spear's thirst as it poured
Slaked royally the hunger of the sword,
Till the fierce heart of steel could scarce fulfil
Its greed and ravin of insatiate will.
For three the fiery spear of Tristram drove
Down ere a point of theirs his harness clove
Or its own sheer mid shaft splintered in twain ;
And his heart bounded in him, and was fain
As fire or wind that takes its fill by night
Of tempest and of triumph : so the knight
Rejoiced and ranged among them, great of hand,
Till seven lay slain upon the heathery sand

Or in the dense breadth of the woodside fern.
Nor did his heart not mightier in him burn
Seeing at his hand that young knight fallen, and high
The red sword reared again that bade him die.
But on the slayer exulting like the flame
Whose foot foreshines the thunder Tristram came
Raging, for piteous wrath had made him fire ;
And as a lion's look his face was dire
That flashed against his foeman ere the sword
Lightened, and wrought the heart's will of its lord,
And clove through casque and crown the wrongdoer's head.
And right and left about their dark chief dead
Hurtled and hurled those felons to and fro,
Till as a storm-wind scatters leaves and snow
His right hand ravening scattered them ; but one
That fled with sidelong glance athwart the sun
Shot, and the shaft flew sure, and smote aright,
Full in the wound's print of his great first fight
When at his young strength's peril he made free
Cornwall, and slew beside its bordering sea
The fair land's foe, who yielding up his breath
Yet left him wounded nigh to dark slow death.
And hardly with long toil thence he won home
Between the grey moor and the glimmering foam,
And halting fared through his own gate, and fell,
Thirsting : for as the sleepless fire of hell
The fire within him of his wound again
Burned, and his face was dark as death for pain,
And blind the blithe light of his eyes : but they
Within that watched and wist not of the fray
Came forth and cried aloud on him for woe.
And scarce aloud his thanks fell faint and slow
As men reared up the strong man fallen and bore
Down the deep hall that looked along the shore.
And laid him soft abed, and sought in vain
If herb or hand of leech might heal his pain.
And the white-handed Iseult hearkening heard
All, and drew nigh, and spake no wifely word
But gazed upon him doubtfully, with eyes
Clouded ; and he in kindly knightly wise
Spake with scant breath, and smiling : ' Surely this
Is penance for discourteous lips to kiss
And feel the brand burn through them, here to lie
And lack the strength here to do more than sigh
And hope not hence for pardon.' Then she bowed
Her head, still silent as a stooping cloud,
And laid her lips against his face ; and he
Felt sink a shadow across him as the sea
Might feel a cloud stoop toward it : and his heart
Darkened as one that wastes by sorcerous art
And knows not whence it withers : and he turned
Back from her emerald eyes his own, and yearned
All night for eyes all golden : and the dark
Hung sleepless round him till the loud first lark
Rang record forth once more of darkness done
And all things born took comfort from the sun

IX.

THE SAILING OF THE SWAN.

FATE, that was born ere spirit and flesh were made,
The fire that fills man's life with light and shade ;
The power beyond all godhead which puts on
All forms of multitudinous unison,
A raiment of eternal change inwrought
With shapes and hues more subtly spun than thought,
Where all things old bear fruit of all things new
And one deep chord throbs all the music through,

The chord of change unchanging, shadow and light
Inseparable as reverberate day from night ;
Fate, that of all things save the soul of man
Is lord and God since body and soul began ,
Fate, that keeps all the tune of things in chime ;
Fate, that breathes power upon the lips of time ;
That smites and soothes with heavy and healing hand
All joys and sorrows born in life's dim land,
Till joy be found a shadow and sorrow a breath
And life no discord in the tune with death,
But all things fain alike to die and live
In pulse and lapse of tides alternative,
Through silence and through sound of peace and strife,
Till birth and death be one in sight of life ;
Fate, heard and seen of no man's eyes or ears,
To no man shown through light of smiles or tears,
And moved of no man's prayer to fold its wings ;
Fate, that is night and light on worldly things;
Fate, that is fire to burn and sea to drown,
Strength to build up and thunder to cast down ;
Fate, shield and screen for each man's life-long head,
And sword at last or dart that strikes it dead ;
Fate, higher than heaven and deeper than the grave,
That saves and spares not, spares and doth not save :
Fate, that in gods' wise is not bought and sold
For prayer or price of penitence or gold ;
Whose law shall live when life bids earth farewell,
Whose justice hath for shadows heaven and hell ;
Whose judgment into no god's hand is given,
Nor is its doom not more than hell or heaven :
Fate, that is pure of love and clean of hate,
Being equal-eyed as nought may be but fate :
Through many and weary days of foiled desire
Leads life to rest where tears no more take fire ;
Through many and weary dreams of quenched delight
Leads life through death past sense of day and night.

Nor shall they feel or fear, whose date is done,
Aught that made once more dark the living sun
And bitterer in their breathing lips the breath
Than the dark dawn and bitter dust of death.
For all the light, with fragrance as of flowers,
That clothes the lithe live limbs of separate hours,
More sweet to savour and more clear to sight
Dawns on the soul death's undivided night.
No vigils has that perfect night to keep,
No fever-fits of vision shake that sleep.
Nor if they wake, and any place there be
Wherein the soul may feel her wings beat free
Through air too clear and still for sound or strife ;
If life were haply death, and death be life ;
If love with yet some lovelier laugh revive,
And song relume the light it bore alive,
And friendship, found of all earth's gifts most good,
Stand perfect in perpetual brotherhood ;
If aught indeed at all of all this be,
Though none might say nor any man might see,
Might he that sees the shade thereof not say
This dream were trustier than the truth of day.
Nor haply may not hope, with heart more clear,
Burn deathward, and the doubtful soul take cheer,
Seeing through the channelled darkness yearn a star
Whose eyebeams are not as the morning's are,
Transient, and subjugate of lordlier light,
But all unconquerable by noon or night,
Being kindled only of life's own inmost fire,
Truth, 'stablished and made sure by strong desire,
Fountain of all things living, source and seed,
Force that perforce transfigures dream to deed,
God that begets on time, the body of death,
Eternity : nor may man's darkening breath,
Albeit it stain, disfigure or destroy
The glass wherein the soul sees life and joy
Only, with strength renewed and spirit of youth,
And brighter than the sun's the body of Truth
Eternal, unimaginable of man,
Whose very face not Thought's own eyes may scan,

But see far off his radiant feet at least,
Trampling the head of Fear, the false high priest,
Whose broken chalice foams with blood no more,
And prostrate on that high priest's chancel floor,
Bruised, overthrown, blind, maimed, with bloodless rod,
The miscreation of his miscreant God.
That sovereign shadow cast of souls that dwell
In darkness and the prison-house of hell
Whose walls are built of deadly dread, and bound
The gates thereof with dreams as iron round,
And all the bars therein and stanchions wrought
Of shadow forged like steel and tempered thought
And words like swords and thunder-clouded creeds
And faiths more dire than sin's most direful deeds:
That shade accursed and worshipped, which hath made
The soul of man that brought it forth a shade
Black as the womb of darkness, void and vain,
A throne for fear, a pasturage for pain,
Impotent, abject, clothed upon with lies,
A foul blind fume of words and prayers that rise,
Aghast and harsh, abhorrent and abhorred,
Fierce as its God, blood-saturate as its Lord;
With loves and mercies on its lips that hiss
Comfort, and kill compassion with a kiss
And strike the world black with their blasting breath;
That ghost whose core of life is very death
And all its light of heaven a shadow of hell,
Fades, falls, wanes, withers by none other spell
But theirs whose eyes and ears have seen and heard
Not the face naked, not the perfect word
But the bright sound and feature felt from far
Of life which feeds the spirit and the star,
Thrills the live light of all the suns that roll,
And stirs the still sealed springs of every soul.
Three dim days through, three slumberless nights long,
Perplexed at dawn, oppressed at evensong,
The strong man's soul now sealed indeed with pain,
And all its springs half dried with drought, had lain
Prisoner within the fleshy dungeon-dress
Sore chafed and wasted with its weariness.
And fain it would have found the star, and fain
Made this funereal prison-house of pain
A watch-tower whence its eyes might sweep, and see
If any place for any hope might be
Beyond the hells and heavens of sleep and strife,
Or any light at all of any life
Beyond the dense false darkness woven above,
And could not, lacking grace to look on love.
And in the third night's dying hour he spake,
Seeing scarce the seals that bound the day-spring break
And scarce the daystar burn above the sea:
'O Ganhardine, my brother true to me,
I charge thee by those nights and days we knew
No great while since in England, by the dew
That bathed those nights with blessing, and the fire
That thrilled those days as music thrills a lyre,
Do now for me perchance the last good deed
That ever love may crave or life may need
Ere love lay life in ashes: take to thee
My ship that shows aloft against the sea
Carved on her stem the semblance of a swan,
And ere the waves at even again wax wan
Pass, if it may be, to my lady's land,
And give this ring into her secret hand,
And bid her think how hard on death I lie,
And fain would look upon her face and die.
But as a merchant's laden be the bark
With royal ware for fraughtage, that King Mark
May take for toll thereof some costly thing;
And when this gift finds grace before the king,
Choose forth a cup, and put therein my ring
Where sureliest only of one it may be seen,
And bid her handmaid bear it to the queen
For earnest of thine homage: then shall she
Fear, and take counsel privily with thee,
To know what errand there is thine from me
And what my need in secret of her sight.
But make thee two sails, one like sea-foam white
To spread for signal if thou bring her back,
And if she come not see the sail be black,
That I may know or ever thou take land
If these my lips may die upon her hand
Or hers may never more be mixed with mine.'
And his heart quailed for grief in Ganhardine.

Hearing ; and all his brother bade he swore
Surely to do, and straight fare forth from shore.
But the white-handed Iseult hearkening heard
All, and her heart waxed hot, and every word
Thereon seemed graven and printed in her thought
As lines with fire and molten iron wrought.
And hard within her heavy heart she cursed
Both, and her life was turned to fiery thirst,
And all her soul was hunger, and its breath
Of hope and life a blast of raging death.
For only in hope of evil was her life.
So bitter burned within the unchilded wife
A virgin lust for vengeance, and such hate
Wrought in her now the fervent work of fate.
Then with a south-west wind the Swan set forth,
And over wintering waters bore to north,
And round the wild land's windy westward end
Up the blown channel bade her bright way bend
East on toward high Tintagel : where at dark
Landing, fair welcome found they of King Mark,
And Ganhardine with Brangwain as of old
Spake, and she took the cup of chiselled gold
Wherein lay secret Tristram's trothplight ring,
And bare it unbeholden of the king
Even to her lady's hand, which hardly took
A gift whereon a queen's eyes well might look,
With grace forlorn of weary gentleness.
But, seeing, her life leapt in her, keen to guess
The secret of the symbol : and her face
Flashed bright with blood whence all its grief-worn grace
Took fire and kindled to the quivering hair.
And in the dark soft hour of starriest air
Thrilled through with sense of midnight, when the world
Feels the wide wings of sleep about it furled,
Down stole the queen, deep-muffled to her wan
Mute restless lips, and came where yet the Swan
Swung fast at anchor : whence by starlight she
Hoised snowbright sails and took the glimmering sea.
But all the long night long more keen and sore
His wound's grief waxed in Tristram evermore,
And heavier always hung his heart asway
Between dim fear and clouded hope of day.
And still with face and heart at silent strife
Beside him watched the maiden called his wife,
Patient, and spake not save when scarce he spake,
Murmuring with sense distraught and spirit awake
Speech bitterer than the words thereof were sweet :
And hatred thrilled her to the hands and feet
Listening : for alway back reiterate came
The passionate faint burden of her name.
Nor ever through the labouring lips astir
Came any word of any thought of her,
But the soul wandering struggled and clung hard
Only to dreams of joy in Joyous Gard
Or wildwood nights beside the Cornish strand,
Or Merlin's holier sleep here hard at hand
Wrapped round with deep soft spells in dim Broceliande.
And with such thirst as joy's drained wine-cup leaves
When fear to hope as hope to memory cleaves
His soul desired the dewy sense of leaves,
The soft green smell of thickets drenched with dawn,
The faint slot kindling on the fiery lawn
As day's first hour made keen the spirit again
That lured and spurred on quest his hound Hodain,
The breeze, the bloom, the splendour and the sound,
That stung like fire the hunter and the hound,
The pulse of wind, the passion of the sea,
The rapture of the woodland : then would he
Sigh, and as one that fain would all be dead
Heavily turn his heavy-laden head
Back, and close eyes for comfort, finding none.
And fain he would have died or seen the sun,
Being sick at heart of darkness : yet afresh
Began the long strong strife of spirit and flesh
And branching pangs of thought whose branches bear
The bloodred fruit whose core is black, despair.
And the wind slackened and again grew great,
Palpitant as men's pulses palpitate
Between the flowing and ebbing tides of face
That wash their lifelong waifs of weal and woe
Through night and light and twilight to and fro.
Now as a pulse of hope its heartbeat throbbed,
Now like one stricken shrank and sank and sobbed,

Then, yearning as with child of death, put forth
A wail that filled the night up south and north
With woful sound of waters: and he said,
'So might the wind wail if the world were dead
And its wings wandered over nought but sea.
I would I knew she would not come to me,
For surely she will come not: then should I,
Once knowing I shall not look upon her, die.
I knew not life could so long breathe such breath
As I do. Nay, what grief were this, if death,
The sole sure friend of whom the whole world saith
He lies not, nor hath ever this been said,
That death would heal not grief—if death were dead
And all ways closed whence grief might pass with life!'
Then softly spake his watching virgin wife
Out of her heart, deep down below her breath:
'Fear not but death shall come—and after death
Judgment.' And he that heard not answered her,
Saying—'Ah, but one there was, if truth not err,
For true men's trustful tongues have said it—one
Whom these mine eyes knew living while the sun
Looked yet upon him, and mine own ears heard
The deep sweet sound once of his godlike word—
Who sleeps and dies not, but with soft live breath
Takes always all the deep delight of death,
Through love's gift of a woman: but for me
Love's hand is not the hand of Nimue,
Love's word no still smooth murmur of the dove,
No kiss of peace for me the kiss of love.
Nor, whatsoe'er thy life's love ever give,
Dear, shall it ever bid me sleep or live;
Nor from thy brows and lips and living breast
As his from Nimue's shall my soul take rest;
Not rest but unrest hath our long love given—
Unrest on earth that wins not rest in heaven.
What rest may we take ever? what have we
Had ever more of peace than has the sea?
Has not our life been as a wind that blows
Through lonelier lands than rear the wild white rose
That each year sees requickened, but for us
Time once and twice hath here or there done thus
And left the next year following empty and bare?
What rose hath our last year's rose left for heir,
What wine our last year's vintage? and to me
More were one fleet forbidden sense of thee,
One perfume of thy present grace, one thought
Made truth one hour, ere all mine hours be nought,
One very word, breath, look, sign, touch of hand,
Than all the green leaves in Broceliande
Full of sweet sound, full of sweet wind and sun;
O God, thou knowest I would no more but one,
I would no more but once more ere I die
Find thus much mercy. Nay, but then were I
Happier than he whom there thy grace hath found,
For thine it must be, this that wraps him round,
Thine only, albeit a fiend's force gave him birth,
Thine that has given him heritage on earth
Of slumber-sweet eternity to keep
Fast in soft hold of everliving sleep.
Happier were I, more sinful man than he,
Whom one love-worthier then than Nimue
Should with a breath make blest among the dead.'
And the wan wedded maiden answering said,
Soft as hate speaks within itself apart:
'Surely ye shall not, ye that rent mine heart,
Being one in sin, in punishment be twain.'
And the great knight that heard not spake again
And sighed, but sweet thought of sweet things gone by
Kindled with fire of joy the very sigh
And touched it through with rapture: 'Ay, this were
How much more than the sun and sunbright air,
How much more than the springtide, how much more
Than sweet strong sea-wind quickening wave and shore
With one divine pulse of continuous breath,
If she might kiss me with the kiss of death,
And make the light of life by death's look dim!'
And the white wedded virgin answered him,

Inwardly. wan with hurt no herb makes whole :
'Yea. surely, ye whose sin hath slain my soul,
Surely your own souls shall have peace in death
And pass with benediction in their breath
And blessing given of mine their sin hath slain.'
And Tristram with sore yearning spake again,
Saying : 'Yea, might this thing once be, how should I,
With all my soul made one thanksgiving, die,
And pass before what judgment-seat may be,
And cry, "Lord, now do all thou wilt with me,
Take all thy fill of justice, work thy will ;
Though all thy heart of wrath have all its fill,
My heart of suffering shall endure, and say,
For that thou gavest me living yesterday
I bless thee though thou curse me." Ay, and well
Might one cast down into the gulf of hell,
Remembering this, take heart and thank his fate—
That God, whose doom now scourges him with hate.
Once, in the wild and whirling world above,
Bade mercy kiss his dying lips with love.
But if this come not, then he doth me wrong.
For what hath love done, all this long life long,
That death should trample down his poor last prayer
Who prays not for forgiveness? Though love were
Sin dark as hate, have we not here that sinned
Suffered? has that been less than wintry wind
Wherewith our love lies blasted? O my own,
O mine and no man's yet save mine alone,
Iseult! what ails thee that I lack so long
All of thee, all things thine for which I long?
For more than watersprings to shadeless sands,
More to me were the comfort of her hands
Touched once, and more than rays that set and rise
The glittering arrows of her glorious eyes,
More to my sense than fire to dead cold air
The wind and light and odour of her hair,
More to my soul than summer's to the south
The mute clear music of her amorous mouth,
And to my heart's heart more than heaven's great rest
The fullness of the fragrance of her breast,
Iseult, Iseult, what grace hath life to give
More than we twain have had of life, and live?
Iseult, Iseult, what grace may death not keep
As sweet for us to win of death, and sleep?
Come therefore, let us twain pass hence and try
If it be better not to live but die,
With love for lamp to light us out of life.'
And on that word his wedded maiden wife
Pale as the moon in star-forsaken skies
Ere the sun fill them, rose with set strange eyes
And gazed on him that saw not: and her heart
Heaved as a man's death-smitten with a dart
That smites him sleeping, warm and full of life :
So toward her lord that was not looked his wife,
His wife that was not : and her heart within
Burnt bitter like an aftertaste of sin
To one whose memory drinks and loathes the lee
Of shame or sorrow deeper than the sea ;
And no fear touched him of her eyes above
And ears that hoarded each poor word whence love
Made sweet the broken music of his breath.
'Iseult, my life that wast and art my death,
My life in life that hast been, and that art
Death in my death, sole wound that cleaves mine heart,
Mine heart that else, how spent soe'er, were whole,
Breath of my spirit and anguish of my soul,
How can this be that hence thou canst not hear,
Being but by space divided? One is here,
But one of twain I looked at once to see ;
Shall death keep time and thou not keep with me?'
And the white married maiden laughed at heart,
Hearing, and scarce with lips at all apart
Spake, and as fire between them was her breath ;
'Yea, now thou liest not: yea, for I am death.'
By this might eyes that watched without behold
Deep in the gulfs of aching air acold

The roses of the dawning heaven that strew
The low soft sun's way ere his power shine through
And burn them up with fire: but far to west
Had sunk the dead moon on the live sea's breast,
Slain as with bitter fear to see the sun:
And eastward was a strong bright wind begun
Between the clouds and waters: and he said,
Seeing hardly through dark dawn her doubtful head,
'Iseult?' and like a death-bell faint and clear
The virgin voice rang answer—'I am here.'
And his heart sprang, and sank again: and she
Spake, saying, 'What would my knightly lord with me?'
And Tristram: 'Hath my lady watched all night
Beside me, and I knew not? God requite
Her love for comfort shown a man nigh dead.'
'Yea, God shall surely guerdon it,' she said,
'Who hath kept me all my days through to this hour.'
And Tristram: 'God alone hath grace and power
To pay such grace toward one unworthier shown
Than ever durst, save only of God alone,
Crave pardon yet and comfort, as I would
Crave now for charity if my heart were good,
But as a coward's it fails me, even for shame.'
Then seemed her face a pale funereal flame
That burns down slow by midnight, as she said:
'Speak, and albeit thy bidding spake me dead,
God's love renounce me if it were not done.'
And Tristram: 'When the sea-line takes the sun
That now should be not far off sight from far,
Look if there come not with the morning star
My ship bound hither from the northward back,
And if the sail be white thereof or black.'
And knowing the soothfast sense of his desire
So sore the heart within her raged like fire
She could not wring forth of her lips a word,
But bowing made sign how humbly had she heard.
And the sign given made light his heart; and she
Set her face hard against the yearning sea
Now all athirst with trembling trust of hope
To see the sudden gates of sunrise ope;
But thirstier yearned the heart whose fiery gate
Lay wide that vengeance might come in to hate.
And Tristram lay at thankful rest, and thought
Now surely life nor death could grieve him aught,
Since past was now life's anguish as a breath,
And surely past the bitterness of death.
For seeing he had found at these her hands this grace,
It could not be but yet some breathing-space
Might leave him life to look again on love's own face.
'Since if for death's sake,' in his heart he said,
'Even she take pity upon me quick or dead,
How shall not even from God's hand be compassion shed?
For night bears dawn, how weak soe'er and wan,
And sweet ere death, men fable, sings the swan.
So seems the Swan my signal from the sea
To sound a song that sweetens death to me
Clasped round about with radiance from above
Of dawn, and closer clasped on earth by love.
Shall all things brighten, and this my sign be dark?'
And high from heaven suddenly rang the lark,
Triumphant; and the far first refluent ray
Filled all the hollow darkness full with day.
And on the deep sky's verge a fluctuant light
Gleamed, grew, shone, strengthened into perfect sight,
As bowed and dipped and rose again the sail's clear white.
And swift and steadfast as a sea-mew's wing
It neared before the wind, as fain to bring
Comfort, and shorten yet its narrowing track.
And she that saw looked hardly toward him back,
Saying, 'Ay, the ship comes surely; but her sail is black.'
And fain he would have sprung upright, and seen,
And spoken: but strong death struck sheer between,

And darkness closed as iron round his head :
And smitten through the heart lay Tristram dead.
And scarce the word had flown abroad, and wail
Risen, ere to shoreward came the snowbright sail,
And lightly forth leapt Ganhardine on land,
And led from ship with swift and reverent hand
Iseult : and round them up from all the crowd
Broke the great wail for Tristram out aloud.
And ere her ear might hear her heart had heard,
Nor sought she sign for witness of the word ;
But came and stood above him newly dead,
And felt his death upon her : and her head
Bowed, as to reach the spring that slakes all drouth ;
And their four lips became one silent mouth.
So came their hour on them that were in life
Tristram and Iseult : so from love and strife
The stroke of love's own hand felt last and best
Gave them deliverance to perpetual rest.
So, crownless of the wreaths that life had wound,
They slept, with flower of tenderer comfort crowned :
From bondage and the fear of time set free,
And all the yoke of space on earth and sea
Cast as a curb for ever : nor might now
Fear and desire bid soar their souls or bow,
Lift up their hearts or break them : doubt nor grief
More now might move them, dread nor disbelief
Touch them with shadowy cold or fiery sting,
Nor sleepless languor with its weary wing,
Nor harsh estrangement, born of time's vain breath,
Nor change, a darkness deeper far than death.
And round the sleep that fell around them then
Earth lies not wrapped, nor records wrought of men
Rise up for timeless token : but their sleep
Hath round it like a raiment all the deep ;
No change or gleam or gloom of sun and rain,
But all time long the might of all the main
Spread round them as round earth soft heaven is spread,
And peace more strong than death round all the dead.

For death is of an hour, and after death
Peace : nor for aught that fear or fancy saith,
Nor even for very love's own sake shall strife
Perplex again that perfect peace with life.
And if, as men that mourn may deem or dream,
Rest haply here than there might sweeter seem,
And sleep, that lays one hand on all, more good
By some sweet grave's grace given of wold or wood
Or clear high glen or sunbright wind-worn down
Than where life thunders through the trampling town
With daylong feet and nightlong overhead,
What grave may cast such grace round any dead,
What so sublime sweet sepulchre may be
For all that life leaves mortal, as the sea?
And these, rapt forth perforce from earthly ground,
These twain the deep sea guards, and girdles round
Their sleep more deep than any sea's gulf lies,
Though changeless with the change in shifting skies,
Nor mutable with seasons : for the grave
That held them once, being weaker than a wave,
The waves long since have buried : though their tomb
Was royal that by ruth's relenting doom
Men gave them in Tintagel : for the word
Took wing which thrilled all piteous hearts that heard
The word wherethrough their lifelong lot stood shown,
And when the long sealed springs of fate were known,
The blind bright innocence of lips that quaffed
Love, and the marvel of the mastering draught,
And all the fraughtage of the fateful bark,
Loud like a child upon them wept King Mark,
Seeing round the sword's hilt which long since had fought
For Cornwall's love a scroll of writing wrought,
A scripture writ of Tristram's hand, wherein
Lay bare the sinless source of all their sin,
No choice of will, but chance and sorcerous art,
With prayer of him for pardon : and his heart

Was molten in him, wailing as he kissed
Each with that kiss of kinship—' Had I wist,
Ye had never sinned nor died thus, nor had I
Borne in this doom that bade you sin and die
So sore a part of sorrow.' And the king
Built for their tomb a chapel bright like spring
With flower-soft wealth of branching tracery made
Fair as the frondage each fleet year sees fade,
That should not fall till many a year were done.
There slept they wedded under moon and sun
And change of stars : and through the casements came
Midnight and noon girt round with shadow and flame
To illume their grave or veil it : till at last
On these things too was doom as darkness cast :
For the strong sea hath swallowed wall and tower,
And where their limbs were laid in woful hour
For many a fathom gleams and moves and moans
The tide that sweeps above their coffined bones
In the wrecked chancel by the shivered shrine :
Nor where they sleep shall moon or sunlight shine
Nor man look down for ever : none shall say,
Here once, or here, Tristram and Iseult lay :
But peace they have that none may gain who live,
And rest about them that no love can give,
And over them, while death and life shall be,
The light and sound and darkness of the sea.

ATALANTA IN CALYDON.

A TRAGEDY.

Τοὺς ζάντας εὖ δρᾶν. κατθανὰν δ πᾶς ἀνὴρ
Γῆ καὶ σκιά· τὸ μηδὲν εἰς οὐδὲν βίπει.

EUR. FR. Mel. 20. (537.)

TO THE MEMORY

OF

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

I NOW DEDICATE, WITH EQUAL AFFECTION, REVERENCE, AND REGRET,
A POEM INSCRIBED TO HIM WHILE YET ALIVE IN WORDS WHICH
ARE NOW RETAINED BECAUSE THEY WERE LAID BEFORE HIM;
AND TO WHICH, RATHER THAN CANCEL THEM, I HAVE
ADDED SUCH OTHERS AS WERE EVOKED BY THE
NEWS OF HIS DEATH: THAT THOUGH LOSING
THE PLEASURE I MAY NOT LOSE THE HONOR
OF INSCRIBING IN FRONT OF MY WORK
THE HIGHEST OF CONTEMPORARY
NAMES.

ὤχεο δὴ Βορέηθεν ἀπότρομος· ἀλλά σε Νύμφαι
ἤγαγον ἀσπασίαν ἡδύπνοοι καθ' ἅλα,
πληροῦσαι μέλιτος θεύθεν στόμα, μή τι Ποσειδῶν
Βλάψῃ, ἐν ὠσὶν ἔχων σὴν μελίγηρυν ὄπα,
τοῖος ἀοιδὸς ἔφυς· ἡμεῖς δ' ἔτι κλαίομεν, οἵ σου
δευόμεθ' οἰχομένου, καὶ σε ποθοῦμεν ἀεί.
εἶπε δὲ Πιερίδων τις ἀναστρεφθεῖσα πρὸς ἄλλην·
ἦλθεν, ἰδού, πάντων φίλτατος ἦλθε βροτῶν,
στέμματα δρεψάμενος νεοθηλέα χερσὶ γεραιαῖς,
καὶ πολιὸν δάφναις ἀμφεκάλυψε κάρα
ἡδύ τι Σικελικαῖς ἐπὶ πηκτίσιν, ἡδύ τι χόρδαις,
ἀσόμενος· πολλὴν γὰρ μετεβάλλε λύραν,
πολλάκι δ' ἐν βήσσαισι καθημενον εὗρεν Ἀπόλλων
ἄνθεσι δ' ἔστεψεν, τερπνὰ δ' ἐδωκε λέγειν,
Πᾶνα τ' ἀείμνηστόν τε Πιτυν Κόρυθον τε δύσεδρον,
ἣν τ' ἐφίλησε θελὶν θνητὸς Ἀμαδρυάδα·
ποντου δ' ἐν μεγάροισιν ἐκοίμισε Κυμοδάμειαν,
τήν τ' Ἀγαμεμνονίαν παῖδ' ἀπέδωκε πατρὶ,
πρὸς δ' ἱεροὺς Δελφοὺς θεόπληκτον ἔπεμψεν Ὀρέστην
τειρόμενον στυγεραῖς ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα θεαῖς

ὤχεο δὴ καὶ ἄνευθε φίλων καὶ ἄνευθεν ἀοιδῆς,
δρεψόμενος μαλακῆς ἄνθεα Περσεφόνης.
ὤχεο· κοὐκ ἔτ' ἔσει, κοὐκ αὖ ποτέ σοι παρεδοῦμαι
ἀζύμενος, χειρῶν χερσὶ θιγὼν ὁσίαις·
νῦν δ' αὖ μνησάμενον γλυκύπικρος ὑπήλυθεν οἰδὼς,
οἷα τυχὼν οἵου πρὸς σέθεν οἷος ἔχω·
οὔποτε σοῖς γέρον, ὄμμα φίλοις φίλον ὄμμασι τερψω,
σῆς, γέρον, ἀψάμενος, φίλτατε, δεξιτερᾶς·
ἦ ψαφαρὰ κόνις, ἦ ψαφαρὸς βιός ἐστι· τὶ τουτων
μεῖον ἐφημερίων ; οὐ κόνις ἀλλὰ βίος·
ἀλλά μοι ἡδύτερός γε πέλεις πολὺ τῶν ἔτ' ἐοντων
ἔπλεο γάρ· σοὶ μὴν ταῦτα θανόντι φέρω,
παῦρα μὲν, ἀλλ' ἀπὸ κῆρος ἐτήτυμα· μηδ' ἀποτρεφθῇς
πρὸς δὲ βαλὼν ἔτι νῦν ἥσυχον ὄμμα δέχου.
οὐ γὰρ ἔχω, μέγα δή τι θέλων, σέθεν ἄξια δοῦναι
θαπτομενου περ ἀπών· οὐ γὰρ ἔνεστιν ἐμοι·
οὐδὲ μελικρήτου παρέχειν γάνος· εἰ γὰρ ἐνείη
καὶ σε χεροῖν ψαύσαι καὶ σέ ποτ' αὖθις ἰδεῖν,
δάκρυσί τε σπονδαῖς τε κάρα φίλον ἀμφιπολεύειν
ὀφθαλμούς θ' ἱεροὺς σοὺς ἱερόν τε δέμας.

εἴθ' ὄφελον. μάλα γὰρ τάδ' ἄν ἀμπαύσειε μερίμνης·
νῦν δὲ πρόσωθεν ἄνευ σήματος οἰκτον ἔγω·
οὐδ' ἐπιτυμβίδιον θρηνῶ μέλος, ἀλλ' ἀπαμυνθεὶς,
ἀλλ' ἀπάνευθεν ἔχων ἀμφιδακρυτὰ πάθη.
ἀλλὰ σὺ χαῖρε θανών, καὶ ἔχων γέρας ἴσθι πρὸς ἀνδρῶν
πρός τε θεῶν, ἐνέροις εἴ τις ἔπεστι θεός.
χαῖρε γέρον, φίλε χαῖρε πατὲρ, πολὺ φέρτατ' ἀοιδῶν
ὧν ἴδομεν, πολὺ δὴ φέρτατ' ἀεισομένων·
χαῖρε, καὶ ὄλβον ἔχοις, οἷόν γε θανόντες ἔχουσιν,
ἡσυχίαν ἔχθρας καὶ φιλότητος ἄτερ.
σήματος οἰχομένου σοι μνήματ' ἐς ὕστερον ἔσται,
σοί τε φιλὴ μνήμη μνήματος οἰχομένου·
ὃν Χάριτες κλαίουσι θεαὶ, κλαίει δ' Ἀφροδίτη
καλλιχόροις Μουκῶν τερψαμένη στεφάνοις·
οὐ γὰρ ἄπαξ ἱερούς ποτε γῆρας ἔτριψεν ἀοιδούς·
τήνδε τὸ σὸν φαίνει μνῆμα τόδ' ἀγλαΐαν.
ἦ φίλος ἦς μακάρεσσι βροτὸς σοὶ δ' εἴ τινι Νύμφαι
δῶρα ποθεινὰ νέμειν, ὕστατα δῶρ', ἔδοσαν.
τὰς νῦν χάλκεος ὕπνος ἔβη καὶ ἀνήνεμος αἰὼν,
καὶ συνθαπτομέναι μοῖραν ἔχουσι μίαν.
εὕδεις καὶ σὺ, καλὸν καὶ ἀγάκλυτον ἐν χθονὶ κοίλῃ
ὕπνον ἐφικόμενος, σῆς ἀπόνοσφι πάτρας,
τῆλε παρὰ ξανθοῦ Τυρσηνικὸν οἶδμα καθεύδεις
νάματος, ἡ δ' ἔτι σὴ μαῖά σε γαῖα ποθεῖ,
ἀλλ' ἀπέχεις, καὶ πρόσθε φιλόπτολις ὧν περ ἀπεῖπας·
εὕδε· μάκαρ δ' ἡμῖν οὐδ' ἀμέγαρτος ἔσει.
βαιὸς ἐπιχθονίων γε χρόνος καὶ μοῖρα κρατήσει,
τοὺς δέ ποτ' εὐφροσύνη τοὺς δέ ποτ' ἄλγος ἔχει·
πολλάκι δ' ἢ βλάπτει φίλος ἢ σκότος ἀμφικαλύπτει
μυρομένους, δάκνει δ' ὕπνος ἐγρηγορότας·
οὐδ' ἔθ' ὅτ' ἐν τύμβοισι κάτέδραθεν ὄμμα θανόντων
ἢ σκότος ἢ τι φέος δήξεται ἠελίου·
οὐδ' ὄναρ ἐννύχιον καὶ ἐνύπνιον οὐδ' ὕπαρ ἔσται
ἤ ποτε τερπομένοις ἤ ποτ' ὀδυρομένοις·
ἀλλ' ἕνα πάντες ἀεὶ θῶκον συνέχουσι καὶ ἕδραν
ἀντὶ βροτῆς ἄβροτον, καλλιμον ἄντι κακῆς.

THE ARGUMENT.

ALTHÆA, daughter of Thestius and Eurythemis, queen of Calydon, being with child of Meleager her first-born son, dreamed that she brought forth a brand burning; and upon his birth came the three Fates and prophesied of him three things, namely these; that he should have great strength of his hands, and good fortune in this life, and that he should live no longer when the brand then in the fire were consumed: wherefore his mother plucked it forth and kept it by her. And the child being a man grown sailed with Jason after the fleece of gold, and won himself great praise of all men living; and when the tribes of the north and west made war upon Ætolia, he fought against their army and scattered it. But Artemis, having at the first stirred up these tribes to war against Œneus, king of Calydon, because he had offered sacrifice to all the gods saving her alone, but her he had forgotten to honor, was yet more wroth because of the destruction of this army, and sent upon the land of Calydon a wild boar, which slew many and wasted all their increase; but him could none slay, and many went against him and perished. Then were all the chief men of Greece gathered together, and among them Atalanta, daughter of Iasius the Arcadian, a virgin; for whose sake Artemis let slay the boar, seeing she favored the maiden greatly; and Meleager having despatched it gave the spoil thereof to Atalanta, as one beyond measure enamored of her; but the brethren of Althæa his mother, Toxeus and Plexippus, with such others as misliked that she only should bear off the praise whereas many had borne the labor, laid wait for her to take away her spoil; but Meleager fought against them and slew them: whom when Althæa their sister beheld and knew to be slain of her son, she waxed for wrath and sorrow like as one mad, and taking the brand whereby the measure of her son's life was meted to him, she cast it upon a fire; and with the wasting thereof his life likewise wasted away, that being brought back to his father's house he died in a brief space; and his mother also endured not long after for very sorrow; and this was his end, and the end of that hunting.

ἴστω δ' ἔστις οὐχ ὑπόπτερος
φρουτίοιν δαεὶς
τὰν ἁ παιδολύμας τόλαινα Θεστιὰς μήσατο
πυρδαῆ τινα πρόνοιαν,
καταίθουσα παιδὸς δαφοινὸν
δαλὸν ἥλικ' ἐπὶ μολὰν
ματρόθεν κελάδησε
σύμμετρόν τε διαὶ βίου
μοιρόκραντον ἐς ἄμαρ.

ÆSCH. Cho. 602–612.

THE PERSONS.

CHIEF HUNTSMAN.
CHORUS,
ALTHÆA.
MELEAGER.
ŒNEUS.
ATALANTA.
TOXEUS.
PLEXIPPUS.
HERALD.
MESSENGER.
SECOND MESSENGER.

ATALANTA IN CALYDON.

CHIEF HUNTSMAN.

MAIDEN, and mistress of the months and stars
Now folded in the flowerless fields of heaven,
Goddess whom all gods love with threefold heart,
Being treble in thy divided deity,
A light for dead men and dark hours, a foot
Swift on the hills as morning, and a hand
To all things fierce and fleet that roar and range
Mortal, with gentler shafts than snow or sleep;
Hear now and help and lift no violent hand,
But favorable and fair as thine eye's beam
Hidden and shown in heaven; for I all night
Amid the king's hounds and the hunting men
Have wrought and worshipped toward thee: nor shall man
See goodlier hounds or deadlier edge of spears;
But for the end, that lies unreached at yet
Between the hands and on the knees of gods.
O fair-faced sun killing the stars and dews
And dreams and desolation of the night!
Rise up, shine, stretch thine hand out, with thy bow
Touch the most dimmest height of trembling heaven,
And burn and break the dark about thy ways,
Shot through and through with arrows; let thine hair
Lighten as flame above that flameless shell
Which was the moon, and thine eyes fill the world,
And thy lips kindle with swift beams; let earth
Laugh, and the long sea fiery from thy feet
Through all the roar and ripple of streaming springs
And foam in reddening flakes and flying flowers
Shaken from hands and blown from lips of nymphs
Whose hair or breast divides the wandering wave
With salt close tresses cleaving lock to lock,
All gold, or shuddering and unfurrowed snow;
And all the winds about thee with their wings,
And fountain-heads of all the watered world;
Each horn of Achelous, and the green
Euenus, wedded with the straitening sea.
For in fair time thou comest; come also thou,
Twin-born with him, and virgin, Artemis.
And give our spears their spoil, the wild boar's hide.
Sent in thine anger against us for sin done
And bloodless alters without wine or fire.
Him now consume thou; for thy sacrifice
With sanguine-shining steam divides the dawn,
And one, the maiden rose of all thy maids,
Arcadian Atalanta, snowy-souled,
Fair as the snow and footed as the wind
From Ladon and well-wooded Mænalus
Over the firm hills and the fleeting sea
Hast thou drawn hither, and many an armèd king,

Heroes, the crown of men, like gods in fight.
Moreover out of all the Ætolian land,
From the full-flowered, Lelantian pasturage
To what of fruitful field the son of Zeus
Won from the roaring river and laboring sea
When the wild god shrank in his horn and fled
And foamed and lessened through his wrathful fords,
Leaving clear lands that steamed with sudden sun,
These virgins with the lightening of the day
Bring thee fresh wreaths and their own sweeter hair,
Luxurious locks and flower-like mixed with flowers,
Clean offering, and chaste hymns; but me the time
Divides from these things; whom do thou not less
Help and give honor, and to mine hounds good speed.
And edge to spears, and luck to each man's hand.

CHORUS.

When the hounds of spring are on winter's traces,
The mother of months in meadow or plain
Fills the shadows and windy places
With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain;
And the brown bright nightingale amorous
Is half assuaged for Itylus,
For the Thracian ships and the foreign faces,
The tongueless vigil, and all the pain.

Come with bows bent and with emptying of quivers,
Maiden most perfect, lady of light,
With a noise of winds and many rivers,
With a clamor 'of waters, and with might;
Bind on thy sandals, O thou most fleet,
Over the splendor and speed of thy feet;
For the faint east quickens, the wan west shivers,
Round the feet of the day and the feet of the night.

Where shall we find her, how shall we sing to her,
Fold our hands round her knees, and cling?
O that man's heart were as fire and could spring to her,
Fire, or the strength of the streams that spring!
For the stars and the winds are unto her
As raiment, as songs of the harp-player;
For the risen stars and the fallen cling to her,
And the southwest-wind and the west-wind sing.

For winter's rains and ruins are over,
And all the season of snows and sins;
The days dividing lover and lover,
The light that loses, the night that wins;
And time remembered is grief forgotten,
And frosts are slain and flowers begotten,
And in green underwood and cover
Blossom by blossom the spring begins.

The full streams feed on flower of rushes,
Ripe grasses trammel a travelling foot,
The faint fresh flame of the young year flushes
From leaf to flower and flower to fruit;
And fruit and leaf are as gold and fire,
And the oat is heard above the lyre,
And the hoofèd heel of a satyr crushes
The chestnut-husk at the chestnut-root.

And Pan by noon and Bacchus by night,
Fleeter of foot than the fleet-foot kid,
Follows with dancing and fills with delight
The Mænad and the Bassarid;
And soft as lips that laugh and hide
The laughing leaves of the trees divide,
And screen from seeing and leave in sight
The god pursuing, the maiden hid.

The ivy falls with the Bacchanal's hair
Over her eyesbrows hiding her eyes;
The wild vine slipping down leaves bare
Her bright breast shortening into sighs;
The wild vine slips with the weight of its leaves,
But the berried ivy catches and cleaves
To the limbs that glitter, the feet that scare
The wolf that follows, the fawn that flies.

ALTHÆA.

What do ye singing? what is this ye sing?

CHORUS.

Flowers bring we, and pure lips that please the gods,
And raiment meet for service; lest the day
Turn sharp with all its honey in our lips.

ALTHÆA.

Night, a black hound, follows the white fawn day,
Swifter than dreams the white flown feet of sleep;
Will ye pray back the night with any prayers?
And though the spring put back a little while
Winter, and snows that plague all men for sin,
And the iron time of cursing, yet I know
Spring shall be ruined with the rain, and storm
Eat up like fire the ashen autumn days.
I marvel what men do with prayers awake
Who dream and die with dreaming; any god,
Yea the least god of all things called divine,
Is more than sleep and waking; yet we say,
Perchance by praying a man shall match his god.
For if sleep have no mercy, and man's dreams
Bite to the blood and burn into the bone,
What shall this man do waking? By the gods,
He shall not pray to dream sweet things to-night,
Having dreamt once more bitter things than death.

CHORUS.

Queen, but what is it that hath burnt thine heart?
For thy speech flickers like a blown-out flame.

ALTHÆA.

Look, ye say well, and know not what ye say;
For all my sleep is turned into a fire,
And all my dreams to stuffs that kindles it.

CHORUS.

Yet one doth well being patient of the gods.

ALTHÆA.

Yea, lest they smite us with some four-foot plague.

CHORUS.

But when time spreads find out some herb for it.

ALTHÆA.

And with their healing herbs infect our blood.

CHORUS.

What ails thee to be jealous of their ways?

ALTHÆA.

What if they give us poisonous drinks for wine?

CHORUS.

They have their will; much talking mends it not.

ALTHÆA.

And gall for milk, and cursing for a prayer?

CHORUS.

Have they not given life, and the end of life?

ALTHÆA.

Lo, where they heal, they help not; thus they do,
They mock us with a little piteousness,
And we say prayers and weep; but at the last,
Sparing awhile, they smite and spare no whit.

CHORUS.

Small praise man gets dispraising the high gods;
What have they done that thou dishonorest them?

ALTHÆA.

First Artemis for all this harried land
I praise not, and for wasting of the boar
That mars with tooth and tusk and fiery feet
Green pasturage and the grace of standing corn,
And meadow and marsh with springs and unblown leaves,
Flocks and swift herds and all that bite sweet grass,

I praise her not ; what things are these to praise ?

CHORUS.

But when the king did sacrifice, and gave
Each god fair dues of wheat and blood and wine,
Her not with bloodshed nor burnt-offering
Revered he, nor with salt or cloven cake ;
Wherefore being wroth she plagued the land ; but now
Takes off from us fate and her heavy things.
Which deed of these twain were not good to praise ?
For a just deed looks always either way
With blameless eyes, and mercy is no fault.

ALTHÆA.

Yea, but a curse she hath sent above all these
To hurt us where she healed us, and hath lit
Fire where the old fire went out, and where the wind
Slackened, hath blown on us with deadlier air.

CHORUS.

What storm is this that tightens all our sail ?

ALTHÆA.

Love, a thwart sea-wind full of rain and foam.

CHORUS.

Whence blown, and born under what stormier star ?

ALTHÆA.

Southward across Euenus from the sea.

CHORUS.

Thy speech turns toward Arcadia like blown wind.

ALTHÆA.

Sharp as the north sets when the snows are out.

CHORUS.

Nay, for this maiden hath no touch of love.

ALTHÆA.

I would she had sought in some cold gulf of sea
Love, or in dens where strange beasts lurk, or fire,
Or snows on the extreme hills or iron land
Where no spring is; I would she had sought therein
And found, or ever love had found her here.

CHORUS.

She is holier than all holy days or things,
The sprinkled water or fume of perfect fire;
Chaste, dedicated to pure prayers, and filled
With higher thoughts than heaven; a maiden clean,
Pure iron, fashioned for a sword; and man
She loves not; what should one such do with love ?

ALTHÆA.

Look you, I speak not as one light of wit,
But as a queen speaks, being heart-vexed: for oft
I hear my brothers wrangling in mid hall,
And am not moved; and my son chiding them,
And these things nowise move me, but I know
Foolish and wise men must be to the end,
And feed myself with patience; but this most,
This moves me, that for wise men as for fools
Love is one thing, an evil thing, and turns
Choice words and wisdom into fire and air.
And in the end shall no joy come, but grief,
Sharp words and soul's division and fresh tears
Flower wise upon the old root of tears brought forth,
Fruit-wise upon the old flower of tears sprung up.
Pitiful sighs, and much regrafted pain.
These things are in my presage, and myself
Am part of them and know not; but in dreams
The gods are heavy on me, and all the fates
Shed fire across my eyelids mixed with night,
And burn me blind, and disilluminate
My sense of seeing, and my perspicuous soul
Darken with vision; seeing I see not, hear

And hearing am not holpen, but mine eyes
Stain many tender broideries in the bed
Drawn up about my face that I may weep
And the king wake not: and my brows and lips
Tremble and sob in sleeping, like swift flames
That tremble, or water when it sobs with heat
Kindled from under; and my tears fill my breast
And speek the fair-dyed pillows round the king
With barren showers and salter than the sea,
Such dreams divide me dreaming; for long since
I dreamed that out of this my womb had sprung
Fi and a firebrand; this was ere my son,
Meleager, a goodly flower in fields of fight,
Felt the light touch him coming forth, and wailed
Childlike; but yet he was not; and in time
I bare him, and my heart was great; for yet
So royally was never strong man born,
Nor queen so nobly bore as noble a thing
As this my son was: such a birth God sent
And such a grace to bear it. Then came in
Three weaving women, and span each a thread,
Saying This for strength and That for luck, and one
Saying Till the brand upon the hearth burn down,
So long shall this man see good days and live.
And I with gathered raiment from the bed
Sprang, and drew forth the brand, snd cast on it
Water, and trod the flame barefoot, and crushed
With naked hand spark beaten out of spark
And blew against and quenched it; for I said,
These are the most high Fates that dwell with us,
And we find favor a little in their sight,
A little, and more we miss of, and much time
Foils us; howbeit they have pitied me, O son,
And thee most piteous, thee a tenderer thing
Than any flower of fleshly seed alive.
Wherefore I kissed and hid him with my hands,
And covered under arms and hair, and wept,
And feared to touch him with my tears, and laughed;
So light a thing was this man, grown so great
Men cast their heads back, seeing against the sun
Blaze the armed man carven on his shield, and hear
The laughter of little bells along the brace
Ring, as birds singing or flutes blown, and watch,
High up the cloven shadow of either plume
Divide the bright light of the brass, and make
His helmet as a windy and wintering moon
Seen through blown cloud and plume-like drift, when ships
Drive, and men strive with all the sea, and oars
Break, and the beaks dip under, drinking death;
Yet was he then but a span long, and moaned
With inarticulate mouth inseparate words,
And with blind lips and fingers wrung my breast
Hard, and thrust out with foolish hands and feet,
Murmuring; but those gray women with bound hair
Who fright the gods frighted not him; he laughed
Seeing them, and pushed out hands to feel and haul
Distaff and thread, intangible; but they
Passed, and I hid the brand, and in my heart
Laughed likewise, having all my will of heaven.
But now I know not if to left or right
The gods have drawn us hither; for again
I dreamt, and saw the black brand burst on fire
As a branch bursts in flower, and saw the flame
Fade flower-wise, and Death came and with dry lips

Blew the charred ash into my breast; and Love
Trampled the ember and crushed it with swift feet.
This I have also at heart; that not for me,
Not for me only or son of mine, O girls,
The gods have wrought life, and desire of life,
Heart's love and heart's division; but for all
There shines one sun and one wind blows till night.
And when night comes the wind sinks and the sun,
And there is no light after, and no storm,
But sleep and much forgetfulness of things.
In such wise I gat knowledge of the gods
Years hence, and heard high sayings of one most wise,
Eurythemis my mother, who beheld
With eyes alive and spake with lips of these
As one on earth disfleshed and disallied
From breath or blood corruptible; such gifts
Time gave her, and an equal soul to these
And equal face to all things; thus she said.
But whatsoever intolerable or glad
The swift hours weave and unweave, I go hence
Full of mine own soul, perfect of myself,
Toward mine and me sufficient; and what chance
The gods cast lots for and shake out on us,
That shall we take, and that much bear withal
And now, before these gather to the hunt,
I will go arm my son and bring him forth,
Lest love or some man's anger work him harm.

CHORUS.

Before the beginning of years,
  There came to the making of man
Time, with a gift of tears;
  Grief, with a glass that ran;
Pleasure, with pain for leaven;
  Summer, with flowers that fell;
Remembrance fallen from heaven,
  And madness risen from hell;
Strength without hands to smite;
  Love that endures for a breath;
Night, the shadow of light,
  And life, the shadow of death.

And the high gods took in hand
  Fire, and the failing of tears,
And a measure of sliding sand
  From under the feet of the years;
And froth and drift of the sea;
  And dust of the laboring earth;
And bodies of things to be
  In the houses of death and of birth;
And wrought with weeping and laughter,
  And fashioned with loathing and love,
With life before and after
  And death beneath and above,
For a day and a night and a morrow,
  That his strength might endure for a span
With travail and heavy sorrow,
  The holy spirit of man.

From the winds of the north and the south
  They gathered as unto strife;
They breathed upon his mouth,
  They filled his body with life;
Eyesight and speech they wrought
  For the veils of the soul therein,
A time for labor and thought,
  A time to serve and to sin;
They gave him light in his ways,
  And love, and a space for delight,
And beauty and length of days,
  And night, and sleep in the night.
His speech is a burning fire;
  With his lips he travaileth;
In his heart is a blind desire,
  In his eyes foreknowledge of death;
He weaves, and is clothed with derision;
  Sows, and he shall not reap;
His life is a watch or a vision
  Between a sleep and a sleep.

MELEAGER.

O sweet new heaven and air without a star,
Fair day, be fair and welcome, as to men
With deeds to do and praise to pluck from thee.
Come forth a child, born with clear sound and light,
With laughter and swift limbs and prosperous looks;
That this great hunt with heroes for the hounds
May leave thee memorable and us well sped.

ALTHÆA.

Son, first I praise thy prayer, then bid thee speed;

But the gods hear men's hands before their lips,
And heed beyond all crying and sacrifice
Light of things done and noise of laboring men.
But thou being armed and perfect for the deed,
Abide ; for like rain-flakes in a wind they grow,
The men thy fellows, and the choice of the world,
Bound to root out the tuskèd plague, and leave
Thanks and safe days and peace in Calydon.

MELEAGER.

For the whole city and all the low-lying land
Flames, and the soft air sounds with them that come ;
The gods give all these fruit of all their works.

ALTHÆA.

Set thine eye thither and fix thy spirit and say
Whom there thou knowest ; for sharp mixed shadow and wind
Blown up between the morning and the mist,
With steam of steeds and flash of bridle or wheel,
And fire, and parcels of the broken dawn,
And dust divided by hard light, and spears
That shine and shift as the edge of wild beasts' eyes,
Smite upon mine ; so fiery their blind edge
Burns, and bright points break up and baffle day.

MELEAGER.

The first, for many I know not, being far off,
Peleus the Larissæan, couched with whom
Sleeps the white sea-bred wife and silver-shod,
Fair as fled foam, a goddess; and their son
Most swift and splendid of men's children born,
Most like a god, full of the future fame.

ALTHÆA.

Who are these shining like one sundered star ?

MELEAGER.

Thy sister's sons, a double flower of men.

ALTHÆA.

O sweetest kin to me in all the world,
O twin-born blood of Leda, gracious heads
Like kindled lights in untempestuos heaven,
Fair flower-like stars on the iron foam of fight,
With what glad heart and kindliness of soul,
Even to the staining of both eyes with tears
And kindling of warm eyelids with desire,
A great way off I greet you, and rejoice
Seeing you so fair, and moulded like as gods.
Far off ye come, and least in years of these,
But lordliest, but worth love to look upon.

MELEAGER.

Even such (for sailing hither I saw far hence,
And where Eurotas hollows his moist rock
Nigh Sparta with a strenuous-hearted stream)
Even such I saw their sisters ; one swan-white,
The little Helen, and less fair than she
Fair Clytæmnestra, grave as pasturing fawns
Who feed and fear some arrow ; but at whiles,
As one smitten with love or wrung with joy,
She laughs and lightens with her eyes, and then
Weeps ; whereat Helen, having laughed, weeps too,
And the other chides her, and she being chid speaks naught,
But cheeks and lips and eyelids kisses her,
Laughing ; so fare they, as in their bloomless bud
And full of unblown life, the blood of gods.

ALTHÆA.

Sweet days befall them and good loves and lords,
And tender and temperate honors of the hearth,
Peace, and a perfect life and blameless bed.
But who shows next an eagle wrought in gold,

That flames and beats broad wings against the sun,
And with void mouth gapes after emptier prey?

MELEAGER.

Know by that sign the reign of Telamon
Between the fierce mouths of the encountering brine
On the strait reefs of twice-washed Salamis.

ALTHÆA.

For like one great of hand he bears himself,
Vine-chapleted, with savors of the sea,
Glittering as wine and moving as a wave.
But who girt round there roughly follows him?

MELEAGER.

Ancæus, great of hand, an iron bulk,
Lwo-edged for fight as the axe against his arm,
Who drives against the surge of stormy spears
Full-sailed; him Cepheus follows, his twin-born,
Chief name next his of all Arcadian men.

ALTHÆA.

Praise be with men abroad; chaste lives with us,
Home-keeping days and household reverences.

MELEAGER.

Next by the left unsandalled foot know thou
The sail and oar of this Ætolian land,
Thy brethren, Toxeus and the violent-souled
Plexippus, over-swift with hand and tongue;
For hands are fruitful, but the ignorant mouth
Blows and corrupts their work with barren breath.

ALTHÆA.

Speech too bears fruit, being worthy; and air blows down
Things poisonous, and high-seated violences,
And with charmed words and songs have men put out
Wild evil, and the fire of tyrannies.

MELEAGER.

Yea, all things have they, save the gods and love.

ALTHÆA.

Love thou the law and cleave to things ordained.

MELEAGER.

Law lives upon their lips whom these applaud.

ALTHÆA.

How sayest thou these? what god applauds new things?

MELEAGER.

Zeus, who hath fear and custom under foot.

ALTHÆA.

But loves not laws thrown down and lives awry.

MELEAGER.

Yet is not less himself than his own law.

ALTHÆA.

Nor shifts and shuffles old things up and down.

MELEAGER.

But what he will remoulds and discreates.

ALTHÆA.

Much, but not this, that each thing live its life.

MELEAGER.

Nor only live, but lighten and lift up higher.

ALTHÆA.

Pride breaks itself, and too much gained is gone?

MELEAGER.

Things gained are gone, but great things done endure.

ALTHÆA.

Child, if a man serve law through all his life

And with his whole heart worship, him all gods
Praise ; but who loves it only with his lips,
And not in heart and deed desiring it
Hides a perverse will with obsequious words,
Him heaven infatuates and his twin-born fate
Tracks, and gains on him, scenting sins far off.
And the swift hounds of violent death devour.
Be man at one with equal-minded gods,
So shall he prosper ; not through laws torn up,
Violated rule and a new face of things.
A woman armed makes war upon herself,
Unwomanlike, and treads down use and wont
And the sweet common honor that she hath,
Love, and the cry of children, and the hand
Trothplight and mutual mouth of marriages.
This doth she, being unloved ; whom if one love,
Not fire nor iron and the wide-mouthed wars
Are deadlier than her lips or braider hair.
For of the one comes poison, and a curse
Falls from the other and burns the lives of men.
But thou, son, be not filled with evil dreams,
Nor with desire of these things ; for with time
Blind love burns out ; but if one feed it full
Till some discoloring stain dyes all his life,
He shall keep nothing praiseworthy, nor die
The sweet wise death of old men honorable,
Who have lived out all the length of all their years
Blameless, and seen well-pleased the face of gods,
And without shame and without fear have wrought
Things memorable, and while their days held out
In sight of all men and the sun's great light
Have gat them glory and given of their own praise
To the earth that bare them and the day that bred,
Home friends and far-off hospitalities,
And filled with gracious and memorial fame
Lands loved of summer or washed by violent seas.
Towns populous and many unfooted ways,
And alien lips and native with their own.
But when white age and venerable death
Mow down the strength and life within their limbs,
Drain out the blood and darken their clear eyes,
Immortal honor is on them, having past
Through splendid life and death desirable
To the clear seat and remote throne of souls,
Lands indiscoverable in the unheard-of west,
Round which the strong stream of a sacred sea
Rolls without wind forever, and the snow
There shows not her white wings and windy feet,
Nor thunder nor swift rain saith anything,
Nor the sun burns, but all things rest and thrive;
And these, filled full of days, divine and dead,
Sages and singers fiery from the god,
And such as loved their land and all things good
And, best beloved of best men, liberty,
Free lives and lips, free hands of men free-born,
And whatsoever on earth was honorable
And whatsoever of all the ephemeral seed,
Live there a life no liker to the gods
But nearer than their life of terrene days.
Love thou such life and look for such a death.

But from the light and fiery dreams of love
Spring heavy sorrows and a sleepless life,
Visions not dreams, whose lids no charm shall close
Nor song assuage them walking; and swift death
Crushes with sterile feet the unripening ear,
Treads out the timeless vintage; whom do thou

Eschewing embrace the luck of this thy life,
Not without honor; and it shall bear to thee
Such fruit as men reap from spent hours and wear.
Few men, but happy; of whom be thou, O son,
Happiest, if thou submit thy soul to fate,
And set thine eyes and heart on hopes high-born
And divine deeds and abstinence divine.
So shalt thou be toward all men all thy days
As light and might communicable, and burn
From heaven among the stars above the hours,
And break not as a man breaks nor burn down:
For to whom other of all heroic names
Have the gods given his life in hand as thine?
And gloriously hast thou lived, and made thy life
To me that bare thee and to all men born
Thankworthy, a praise forever; and hast won fame
When wild wars broke all round thy father's house,
And the mad people of windy mountain ways
Laid spears against us like a sea, and all
Ætolia thundered with Thessalian hoofs;
Yet these, as wind baffles the foam, and beats
Straight back the relaxed ripple, didst thou break
And loosen all their lances, till undone
And man from man they fell; for ye twain stood
God against god, Ares and Artemis,
And thou the mightier; wherefore she unleashed
A sharp-toothed curse thou too shalt overcome;
For in the greener blossom of thy life
Ere the full blade caught flower, and when time gave
Respite, thou didst not slacken soul nor sleep,
But with great hand and heart seek praise of men
Out of sharp straits and many a grievous thing,
Seeing the strange foam of undivided seas
On channels never sailed in, and by shores
Where the old winds cease not blowing, and all the night
Thunders, and all day is no delight to men.

CHORUS.

Meleager, a noble wisdom and fair words
The gods have given this woman; hear thou these.

MELEAGER.

O mother, I am not fain to strive in speech
Nor set my mouth against thee, who art wise
Even as they say and full of sacred words.
But one thing I know surely, and cleave to this;
That though I be not subtle of wit as thou
Nor womanlike to weave sweet words, and melt
Mutable minds of wise men as with fire,
I too, doing justly and reverencing the gods,
Shall not want wit to see what things be right.
For whom they love and whom reject, being gods,
There is no man but seeth, and in good time
Submits himself, refraining all his heart.
And I too as thou sayest have seen great things;
Seen otherwhere, but chiefly when the sail
First caught between stretched ropes the roaring west,
And all our oars smote eastward, and the wind
First flung round faces of seafaring men
White splendid snow-flakes of the sundering foam,
And the first furrow in virginal green sea
Followed the plunging ploughshare of hewn pine,
And closed, as when deep sleep subdues man's breath
Lips close and heart subsides; and closing, shone
Sunlike with many a Nereid's hair, and moved
Round many a trembling mouth of doubtful gods,
Risen out of sunless and sonorous gulfs
Through waning water and into shallow light,

That watched us; and when flying the dove was snared
As with men's hands, but we shot after and sped
Clear through the irremeable Symplegades;
And chiefliest when hoar beach and herbless cliff
Stood out ahead from Colchis, and we heard
Clefts hoarse with wind, and saw through narrowing reefs
The lightning of the intolerable wave
Flash, and the white wet flame of breakers burn
Far under a kindling south-wind, as a lamp
Burns and bends all its blowing flame one way;
Wild heights untravelled of the wind, and vales
Cloven seaward by their violent streams, and white
With bitter flowers and bright salt scurf of brine;
Heard sweep their sharp swift gales, and bowing birdwise
Shriek with birds' voices, and with furious feet
Tread loose the long skirts of a storm; and saw
The whole white Euxine clash together and fall
Full-mouthed, and thunderous from a thousand throats:
Yet we drew thither and won the fleece and won
Medea, deadlier than the sea; but there
Seeing many a wonder and fearful things to men
I saw not one thing like this one seen here,
Most fair and fearful, feminine, a god,
Faultless; whom I that love not, being unlike,
Fear, and give honor, and choose from all the gods.

ŒNEUS.

Lady, the daughter of Thestius, and thou, son,
Not ignorant of your strife nor light of wit,
Scared with vain dreams and fluttering like spent fire,
I come to judge between you, but a king
Full of past days and wise from years endured.
Nor thee I praise who art fain to undo things done;
Nor thee, who art swift to esteem them overmuch.
For what the hours have given is given, and this
Changeless; howbeit these change, and in good time
Devise new things and good, not one thing still.
Us have they sent now at our need for help
Among men armed a woman, foreign born,
Virgin, not like the natural flower of things
That grows and bears and brings forth fruit and dies;
Unlovable, no light for a husband's house,
Espoused; a glory among unwedded girls,
And chosen of gods who reverence maidenhood.
These too we honor in honoring her; but thou,
Abstain thy feet from following, and thine eyes
From amorous touch; nor set toward hers thine heart.
Son, lest hate bear no deadlier fruit than love.

ALTHÆA.

O king, thou art wise, but wisdom halts; and just,
But the gods love not justice more than fate,
And smite the righteous and the violent mouth,
And mix with insolent blood the reverent man's,
And bruise the holier as the lying lips.
Enough; for wise words fail me, and my heart
Takes fire and trembles flamewise, O my son,
O child, for thine head's sake; mine eyes wax thick,
Turning toward thee, so goodly a weaponed man,
So glorious; and for love of thine own eyes
They are darkened, and tears burn them, fierce as fire,

And my lips pause and my soul sinks with love.
But by thine hand, by thy sweet life and eyes,
By thy great heart and these clasped knees, O son,
I pray thee that thou slay me not with thee.
For there was never a mother woman-born
Loved her sons better; and never a queen of men
More perfect in her heart toward whom she loved.
For what lies light on many and they forget,
Small things and transitory as a wind o' the sea,
I forget never; I have seen thee all thine years
A man in arms, strong and a joy to men
Seeing thine head glitter and thine hand burn its way
Through a heavy and iron furrow of sundering spears;
But always also a flower of three suns old,
The small one thing that lying drew down my life
To lie with thee and feed thee; a child and weak,
Mine, a delight to no man, sweet to me.
Who then sought to thee? who gat help? who knew
If thou wert goodly? nay, no man at all.
Or what sea saw thee, or sounded with thine oar,
Child? or what strange land shone with war through thee?
But fair for me thou wert, O little life,
Fruitless, the fruit of mine own flesh, and blind,
More than much gold, ungrown, a foolish flower.
For silver nor bright snow nor feather of foam
Was whiter, and no gold yellower than thine hair,
O child, my child; and now thou art lordlier grown,
Not lovelier, nor a new thing in mine eyes,
I charge thee by thy soul and this my breast,
Fear thou the gods and me and thine own heart,
Lest all these turn against thee; for who knows
What wind upon what wave of altering time
Shall speak a storm and blow calamity?
And there is nothing stabile in the world
But the gods break it; yet not less, fair son,
If but one thing be stronger, if one endure,
Surely the bitter and the rooted love
That burns between us, going from me to thee,
Shall more endure than all things. What dost thou,
Following strange loves? why wilt thou kill mine heart?
Lo, I talk wild and windy words, and fall
From my clear wits, and seem of mine own self
Dethroned, dispraised, disseated; and my mind,
That was my crown, breaks, and mine heart is gone,
And I am naked of my soul, and stand
Ashamed, as a mean woman; take thou thought:
Live if thou wilt, and if thou wilt not, look,
The gods have given thee life to lose or keep,
Thou shalt not die as men die, but thine end
Fallen upon thee shall break me unaware.

MELEAGER.

Queen, my whole heart is molten with thy tears,
And my limbs yearn with pity of thee, and love
Compels with grief mine eyes and laboring breath:
For what thou art I know thee, and this thy breast
And thy fair eyes I worship, and am bound
Toward thee in spirit and love thee in all my soul.
For there is nothing terribler to men
Than the sweet face of mothers, and the might.
But what shall be let be; for us the day
Once only lives a little, and is not found.
Time and the fruitful hour are more than we,
And these lay hold upon us; but thou, God,
Zeus, the sole steersman of the helm of things,

Father, be swift to see us, and as thou wilt
Help: or if adverse, as thou wilt, refrain.

CHORUS.

We have seen thee, O Love, thou art fair; thou art goodly, O Love;
Thy wings make light in the air as the wings of a dove.
Thy feet are as winds that divide the stream of the sea;
Earth is thy covering to hide thee, the garment of thee.
Thou art swift and subtle and blind as a flame of fire;
Before thee the laughter, behind thee the tears of desire;
And twain go forth beside thee, a man with a maid;
Her eyes are the eyes of a bride whom delight makes afraid;
As the breath in the buds that stir is her bridal breath:
But Fate is the name of her; and his name is Death.

For an evil blossom was born
Of sea-foam and the frothing of blood,
Blood-red and bitter of fruit,
And the seed of it laughter and tears,
And the leaves of it madness and scorn;
A bitter flower from the bud,
Sprung of the sea without root,
Sprung without graft from the years.

The weft of the world was untorn
That is woven of the day on the night,
The hair of the hours was not white
Nor the raiment of time over-worn,
When a wonder, a world's delight,
A perilous goddess was born;
And the waves of the sea as she came
Clove, and the foam at her feet,
Fawning, rejoiced to bring forth
A fleshly blossom, a flame
Filling the heavens with heat
To the cold white ends of the north.
And in air the clamorous birds,
And men upon earth that hear
Sweet articulate words
Sweetly divided apart,
And in shallow channel and mere
The rapid and footless herds,
Rejoiced, being foolish of heart.

For all they said upon earth,
She is fair, she is white like a dove,
And the life of the world in her breath
Breathes, and is born at her birth;
For they knew thee for mother of love,
And knew thee not mother of death.

What hadst thou to do being born,
Mother, when winds were at ease,
As a flower of the springtime of corn,
A flower of the foam of the seas?
For bitter thou wast from thy birth.
Aphrodite, a mother of strife;
For before thee some rest was on earth,
A little respite from tears,
A little pleasure of life;
For life was not then as thou art,
But as one that waxeth in years
Sweet-spoken, a fruitful wife;
Earth had no thorn, and desire
No sting, neither death any dart;
What hadst thou to do among these,
Thou, clothed with a burning fire,
Thou, girt with sorrow of heart,
Thou, sprung of the seed of the seas
As an ear from a seed of corn,
As a brand plucked forth of a pyre,
As a ray shed forth of the morn,
For division of soul and disease,
For a dart and a sting and a thorn?
What ailed thee then to be born?
Was there not evil enough,
Mother, and anguish on earth
Born with a man at his birth,
Wastes underfoot, and above
Storm out of heaven, and dearth
Shaken down from the shining thereof
Wrecks from afar overseas
And peril of shallow and firth,
And tears that spring and increase
In the barren places of mirth,
That thou, having wings as a dove,
Being girt with desire for a girth,
That thou must come after these.
That thou must lay on him love?

Thou shouldst not so have been born:
But death should have risen with thee,
Mother, and visible fear,
Grief, and the wringing of hands,
And noise of many that mourn;
The smitten bosom, the knee
Bowed, and in each man's ear
A cry as of perishing lands,
A moan as of people in prison,

A tumult of infinite griefs;
And thunder of storm on the sands,
And wailing of wives on the shore;
And under thee newly arisen,
Loud shoals and shipwrecking reefs,
Fierce air and violent light:
Sail rent and sundering oar,
Darkness and noises of night;
Clashing of streams in the sea,
Wave against wave as a sword,
Clamor of currents, and foam;
Rains making ruin on earth,
Winds that wax ravenous and roam
As wolves in a wolfish horde;
Fruits growing faint in the tree,
And blind things dead in their birth;
Famine, and blighting of corn,
When thy time was come to be born.

All these we know of; but thee
Who shall discern or declare?
In the uttermost ends of the sea
The light of thine eyelids and hair,
The light of thy bosom as fire
Between the wheel of the sun
And the flying flames of the air?
Wilt thou turn thee not yet nor have pity,
But abide with despair and desire
And the crying of armies undone,
Lamentation of one with another,
And breaking of city by city;
The dividing of friend against friend,
The severing of brother and brother;
Wilt thou utterly bring to an end?
Have mercy, mother!

For against all men from of old
Thou hast set thine hand as a curse,
And cast out gods from their places.
These things are spoken of thee.
Strong kings and goodly with gold
Thou hast found out arrows to pierce,
And made their kingdoms and races
As dust and surf of the sea.
All these, overburdened with woes
And with length of their days waxen weak,
Thou slewest; and sentest moreover
Upon Tyro an evil thing.
Rent hair and a fetter and blows
Making bloody the flower of the cheek,
Though she lay by a god as a lover,
Though fair, and the seed of a king.
For of old, being full of thy fire,
She endured not longer to wear
On her bosom a saffron vest,
On her shoulder an ashwood quiver;
Being mixed and made one through desire.
With Enipeus and all her hair
Made moist with his mouth, and her breast
Filled full of the foam of the river.

ATALANTA.

Sun, and clear light among green hills, and day
Late risen and long sought after, and you just gods
Whose hands divide anguish and recompense,
But first the sun's white sister, a maid in heaven,
On earth of all maids worshipped,—hail, and hear,
And witness with me if not without sign sent,
Not without rule and reverence, I a maid
Hallowed, and huntress holy as whom I serve,
Here in your sight and eyeshot of these men
Stand, girt as they toward hunting, and my shafts
Drawn; wherefore all ye stand up on my side,
If I be pure and all ye righteous gods,
Lest one revile me, a woman, yet no wife,
That bear a spear for spindle, and this bow strung
For a web woven; and with pure lips salute
Heaven, and the face of all the gods, and dawn
Filling with maiden flames and maiden flowers
The starless fold o' the stars, and making sweet
The warm wan heights of the air, moon-trodden ways
And breathless gates and extreme hills of heaven.
Whom, having offered water and bloodless gifts,
Flowers, and a golden circlet of pure hair,
Next Artemis I bid be favorable
And make this day all golden, hers and ours,
Gracious and good and white to the unblamed end.

But thou, O well-beloved, of all my days
Bid it be fruitful, and a crown for all,
To bring forth leaves and bind round all my hair
With perfect chaplets woven for thine of thee.
For not without the word of thy chaste mouth,
For not without law given and clean command,
Across the white straits of the running sea
From Elis even to the Acheloïan horn
I with clear winds came hither and gentle gods,
Far off my father's house, and left uncheered
Iasius, and uncheered the Arcadian hills
And all their green-haired waters, and all woods
Disconsolate to hear no horn of mine
Blown, and behold no flash of swift white feet.

MELEAGER.

For thy name's sake and awe toward thy chaste head,
O holiest Atalanta, no man dares
Praise thee, though fairer than whom all men praise,
And godlike for thy grace of hallowed hair
And holy habit of thine eyes and feet
That make the blown foam neither swift nor white
Though the wind winnow and whirl it; yet we praise
Gods, found because of thee adorable
And for thy sake praiseworthiest from all men:
Thee therefore we praise also, thee as these,
Pure, and light lit at the hands of gods.

TOXEUS.

How long will ye whet spears with eloquence,
Fight and kill beasts dry-handed with sweet words?
Cease, or talk still and slay thy boars at home.

PLEXIPPUS.

Why, if she ride among us for a man,
Sit thou for her and spin; a man grown girl
Is worth a woman weaponed; sit thou here

MELEAGER.

Peace, and be wise; no gods love idle speech

PLEXIPPUS.

Nor any man a man's mouth woman-tongued.

MELEAGER.

For my lips bite not sharper than mine hands.

PLEXIPPUS.

Nay, both bite soft, but no whit softly mine.

MELEAGER.

Keep thine hands clean; they have time enough to stain.

PLEXIPPUS.

For thine shall rest and wax not red today.

MELEAGER.

Have all thy will of words; talk out thine heart.

ALTHÆA.

Refrain your lips, O brethren, and my son,
Lest words turn snakes and bite you uttering them.

TOXEUS.

Except she give her blood before the gods,
What profit shall a maid be among men?

PLEXIPPUS.

Let her come crowned and stretch her throat for a knife,
Bleat out her spirit and die, and so shall men
Through her too prosper and through prosperous gods;
But nowise through her living; shall she live
A flower-bud of the flower bed, or sweet fruit
For kisses and the honey-making mouth,
And play the shield for strong men and the spear?
Then shall the heifer and her mate lock horns,

And the bride overbear the groom, and men
Gods; for no less division sunders these;
Since all things made are seasonable in time,
But if one alter unseasonable are all.
But thou, O Zeus, hear me that I may slay
This beast before thee and no man halve with me
Nor woman, lest these mock thee, though a god,
Who hast made men strong, and thou being wise be held
Foolish; for wise is that thing which endures.

ATALANTA.

Men, and the chosen of all this people, and thou,
King, I beseech you a little bear with me.
For if my life be shameful that I live,
Let the gods witness and their wrath; but these
Cast no such word against me. Thou, O mine,
O holy, O happy goddess, if I sin
Changing the words of women and the works
For spears and strange men's faces, hast not thou
One shaft of all thy sudden seven that pierced
Seven through the bosom or shining throat or side,
All couched about one mothers' loosening knees,
All holy born, engraffed of Tantalus?
But if toward any of you I am overbold
That take thus much upon me, let him think
How I, for all my forest holiness,
Fame, and this armed and iron maidenhood,
Pay thus much also; I shall have no man's love
Forever, and no face of children born
Or feeding lips upon me or fastening eyes
Forever, nor being dead shall kings my sons
Mourn me and bury, and tears on daughter's cheeks
Burn; but a cold and sacred life, but strange,
But far from dances and the back-blowing torch,
Far off from flowers or any bed of man
Shall my life be forever: me the snows
That face the first o' the morning, and cold hills
Full of the land-wind and sea-travelling storms
And many a wandering wing of noisy nights
That know the thunder and hear the thickening wolves—
Me the utmost pine and footless frost of woods
That talk with many winds and gods, the hours
Re-risen, and white divisions of the dawn,
Springs thousand-tongued with the intermitting reed
And streams that murmur of the mother snow—
Me these allure, and know me; but no man
Knows, and my goddess only. Lo now, see,
If one of all you these things vex at all.
Would God that any of you had all the praise
And I no manner of memory when I die,
So might I show before her perfect eyes
Pure, whom I follow, a maiden to my death.
But for the rest let all have all they will;
For is it a grief to you that I have part,
Being woman merely, in your male might and deeds
Done by main strength? yet in my body is throned
As great a heart, and in my spirit, O men,
I have not less of godlike. Evil it were
That one a coward should mix with you, one hand
Fearful, one eye abase itself; and these
Well might ye hate and well revile, not me.
For not the difference of the several flesh
Being vile or noble or beautiful or base
Makes praiseworthy, but purer spirit and heart
Higher than these meaner mouths and limbs, that feed,
Rise, rest, and are and are not; and for me,
What should I say? but by the gods of the world

And this my maiden body, by all oaths
That bind the tongue of men and the evil will,
I am not mighty-minded, nor desire
Crowns, nor the spoil of slain things nor the fame;
Feed ye on these, eat and wax fat; cry out,
Laugh, having eaten, and leap without a lyre
Sing, mix the wind with clamor, smite and shake
Sonorus timbrels and tumultuous hair,
And fill the dance up with tempestuous feet,
For I will none; but having prayed my prayers
And made thank-offering for prosperities,
I shall go hence and no man see me more.
What thing is this for you to shout me down,
What, for a man to grudge me this my life
As it were envious of all yours, and I
A thief of reputations? nay, for now,
If there be any highest in heaven, a god
Above all thrones and thunders of the gods
Throned, and the wheel of the world roll under him,
Judge he between me and all of you, and see
If I transgress at all: but ye, refrain
Transgressing hands and reinless mouths, and keep
Silence, less by much foam of violent words
And proper poison of your lips ye die.

ŒNEUS.

O flower of Tega, maiden, fleetest foot
And holiest head of women, have good cheer
Of thy good words: but ye, depart with her
In peace and reverence, each with blameless eye
Following his fate; exalt your hands and hearts,
Strike, cease not, arrow on arrow and wound on wound,
And go with gods and with the gods return.

CHORUS.

Who hath given man speech? or who hath set therein
A thorn for peril and a snare for sin?
For in the word his life is and his breath,
And in the word his death,
That madness and the infatuate heart may breed
From the word's womb the deed
And life bring one thing forth ere all pass by,
Even one thing which is ours yet cannot die—
Death. Hast thou seen him ever anywhere,
Time's twin-born brother, imperishable as he
Is perishable and plaintive, clothed with care
And mutable as sand,
But death is strong and full of blood and fair
And perdurable and like a lord of land?
Nay, time thou seest not, death thou wilt not see
Till life's right hand be loosened from thine hand
And thy life-days from thee.
For the gods very subtly fashion
Madness with sadness upon earth:
Not knowing in anywise compassion,
Nor holding pity of any worth;
And many things they have given and taken,
And wrought and ruined many things;
The firm land have they loosed and shaken,
And sealed the sea with all her springs;
They have wearied time with heavy burdens
And vexed the lips of life with breath:
Set men to labor and given them guerdons,
Death and great darkness after death:
Put moans into the bridal measure
And on the bridal wools a stain:
And circled pain about with pleasure,
And girdled pleasure about with pain;
And strewed one marriage-bed with tears and fire
For extreme loathing and supreme desire.

What shall be done with all these tears of ours?
Shall they make watersprings in the fair heaven
To bathe the brows of morning? or like flowers
Be shed and shine before the starriest hours.

Or made the raiment of the weeping
Seven?
Or rather, O our masters, shall they be
Food for the famine of the grievous sea,
A great well-head of lamentation
Satiating the sad gods? or fall and flow
Among the years and seasons to and fro,
And wash their feet with tribulation
And fill them full with grieving ere they
go?
Alas, our lords, and yet alas again,
Seeing all your iron heaven is gilt as gold
But all we smite thereat in vain;
Smite the gates barred with groanings
manifold,
But all the floors are paved with our
pain.
Yea, and with the weariness of lips and
eyes,
With breaking of the bosom, and with
sighs,
We labor, and are clad and fed with
grief
And filled with days we would not fain
behold
And nights we would not hear of; we wax
old,
All we wax old and wither like a leaf.
We are outcast, strayed between bright sun
and moon;
Our light and darkness are as leaves of
flowers,
Black flowers and white, that perish; and
the noon
As midnight, and the night as daylight
hours.
A little fruit a little while is ours
And the worm finds it soon.

But up in heaven the high gods one by one
Lay hands upon the draught that quick-
eneth,
Fulfilled with all tears shed and all things
done,
And stir with soft imperishable breath
The bubbling bitterness of life and
death,
And hold it to our lips and laugh; but
they
Preserve their lips from tasting night or
day,
Lest they too change and sleep, the fates
that spun,
The lips that made us and the hands that
slay:
Lest all these change, and heaven bow
down to none,
Change and be subject to the secular sway
And terrene revolution of the sun.
Therefore they thrust it from them, putting
time away.
I would the wine of time, made sharp and
sweet
With multitudinous days and nights and
tears
And many mixing savors of strange
years,
Were no more trodden of them under feet,
Cast out and spilt about their holy
places:
That life were given them as a fruit to
eat
And death to drink as water; that the
light
Might ebb, drawn backward from their
eyes, and night
Hide for one hour the imperishable
faces.
That they might rise up sad in heaven,
and know
Sorrow and sleep, one paler than young
snow,
One cold as blight of dew and ruinous
rain;
Rise up and rest and suffer a little, and
be
Awhile as all things born with us, and
we,
And grieve as men, and like slain men
be slain.

For now we know not of them; but one
saith
The gods are gracious, praising God;
and one,
When hast thou seen? or hast thou felt
his breath
Touch nor consume thy eyelids as the
sun,
Nor fill thee to the lips with fiery death?
None hath beheld him, none
Seen above other gods and shapes of
things,
Swift without feet and flying without
wings,
Intolerable, not clad with death or life,
Insatiable, not known of night or day,
The lord of love and loathing and of
strife
Who gives a star and takes a sun away;

Who shapes the soul, and makes her a barren wife
To the earthy body and grievous growth of clay;
Who turns the large limbs to a little flame
And binds the great sea with a little sand;
Who makes desire, and slays desire with shame;
Who shakes the heaven as ashes in his hand;
Who, seeing the light and shadow for the same,
Bids day waste night as fire devours a brand,
Smites without sword, and scourges without rod;
The supreme evil, God.

Yea, with thine hate, O God, thou hast covered us,
One saith, and hidden our eyes away from sight,
And made us transitory and hazardous,
Light things and slight;
Yet have men praised thee, saying, He hath made man thus,
And he doeth right.
Thou hast kissed us, and hath smitten; thou hast laid
Upon us with thy left hand life, and said,
Live: and again thou hast said, Yield up your breath,
And with thy right hand laid upon us death.
Thou hast sent us sleep, and stricken sleep with dreams,
Saying, Joy is not, but love of joy shall be;
Thou hast made sweet springs for all the pleasant streams,
In the end thou hast made them bitter with the sea.
Thou hast fed one rose with dust of many men;
Thou hast marred one face with fire of many tears;
Thou hast taken love, and given us sorrow again;
With pain thou hast filled us full to the eyes and ears.
Therefore because thou art strong, our father, and we
Feeble; and thou art against us, and thine hand
Constrains us in the shallows of the sea
And breaks us at the limits of the land;
Because thou hast bent thy lightnings as a bow,
And loosed the hours like arrows; and let fall
Sins and wild words and many a winged woe
And wars among us, and one end of all;
Because thou hast made the thunder, and thy feet
Are as rushing water when the skies
Break, but thy face as an exceeding heat
And flames of fire the eyelids of thine eyes;
Because thou art over all who are over us
Because thy name is life and our name death;
Because thou art cruel and men are piteous,
And our hands labor and thine hand scattereth;
Lo, with hearts rent and knees made tremulous,
Lo, with ephemeral lips and casual breath,
At least we witness of thee ere we die
That these things are not otherwise, but thus;
That each man in his heart sigheth, and saith,
That all men even as I,
All we are against thee, against thee, O God most high.

But ye, keep ye on earth
Your lips from over-speech,
Loud words and longing are so little worth;
And the end is hard to reach.
For silence after grievous things is good,
And reverence, and the fear that makes men whole,
And shame, and righteous governance of blood,
And lordship of the soul.
But from sharp words and wits men pluck no fruit,
And gathering thorns they shake the tree at root;
For words divide and rend;
But silence is most noble to the end.

ALTHÆA.

I heard within the house a cry of news
And came forth eastward hither, where the dawn

Cheers first these warder gods that face the sun
And next our eyes unrisen ; for unaware
Came clashes of swift hoofs and trampling feet
And through the windy pillared corridor
Light sharper than the frequent flames of day
That daily fill it from the fiery dawn;
Gleams, and a thunder of people that cried out,
And dust and hurrying horsemen; lo their chief,
That rode with Œneus rein by rein, returned.
What cheer, O herald of my lord the king?

HERALD.

Lady, good cheer and great; the boar is slain.

CHORUS.

Praised be all gods that look toward Calydon.

ALTHÆA.

Good news and brief; but by whose happier hand?

HERALD.

A maiden's and a prophet's and thy son's.

ALTHÆA.

Well fare the spear that severed him and life.

HERALD.

Thine own, and not an alien, hast thou blest.

ALTHÆA.

Twice be thou too for my sake blest and his.

HERALD.

At the king's word I rode afoam for thine.

ALTHÆA,

Thou sayest he tarrieth till they bring the spoil?

HERALD.

Hard by the quarry, where they breathe, O queen.

ALTHÆA.

Speak thou their chance; but some bring flowers and crown
These gods and all the lintel, and shed wine,
Fetch sacrifice and slay; for heaven is good.

HERALD.

Some furlongs northward where the brakes begin
West of that narrowing range of warrior hills
Whose brooks have bled with battle when thy son
Smote Acarnania, there all they made halt,
And with keen eye took note of spear and hound,
Royally ranked; Laertes island-born,
The young Gerenian Nestor, Panopeus,
And Cepheus and Ancæus, mightiest thewed,
Arcadians; next, and evil-eyed of these,
Arcadian Atalanta, with twain hounds
Lengthening the leash, and under nose and brow
Glittering with lipless tooth and fire-swift eye;
But from her white-braced shoulder the plumed shafts
Rang, and the bow shone from her side; next her
Meleager; like a sun in spring that strikes
Branch into leaf and bloom into the world,
A glory among men meaner; Iphicles,
And following him that slew the biform bull
Pirithous, and divine Eurytion,
And, bride-bound to the gods, Æacides.
Then Telamon his brother, and Argive-born
The seer and sayer of visions and of truth,
Amphiaraus; and a fourfold strength,
Thine, even thy mother's and thy sister's sons.
And recent from the roar of foreign foam
Jason; and Dryas twin-begot with war,
A blossom of bright battle, sword and man
Shining; and Idas, and the keenest eye
Of Lynceus, and Admetus twice-espoused,
And Hippasus and Hyleus, great in heart.
These having halted bade blow horns, and rode
Through woods and waste lands cleft by stormy streams,
Past yew-trees and the heavy hair of pines.

And where the dew is thickest under oaks,
This way and that; but questing up and down
They saw no trail nor scented; and one said,
Plexippus, Help, or help not, Artemis,
And we will flay thy boarskin with male hands;
But saying, he ceased and said not that he would,
Seeing where the green ooze of a sun-struck marsh
Shook with a thousand reeds untunable,
And in their moist and multitudinous flower
Slept no soft sleep, with violent visions fed,
The blind bulk of the immeasurable beast.
And seeing, he shuddered with sharp lust of praise
Through all his limbs, and launched a double dart,
And missed; for much desire divided him,
Too hot of spirit and feebler than his will,
That his hand failed, though fervent; and the shaft,
Sundering the rushes, in a tamarisk stem
Shook, and stuck fast; then all abode save one,
The Arcadian Atalanta; from her side
Sprang her hounds, laboring at the leash, and slipped,
And plashed ear-deep with plunging feet; but she
Saying, Speed it as I send it for thy sake,
Goddess, drew bow and loosed; the sudden string
Rang, and sprang inward, and the waterish air
Hissed, and the moist plumes of the songless reeds
Moved as a wave which the wind moves no more.
But the boar heaved half out of ooze and slime
His tense flank trembling round the barbéd wound,
Hateful; and fiery with invasive eyes
And bristling with intolerable hair
Plunged, and the hounds clung, and green flowers and white
Reddened and broke all round them where they came.
And charging with sheer tusk he drove, and smote

Hyleus; and sharp death caught his sudden soul,
And violent sleep shed night upon his eyes.
Then Peleus, with strong strain of hand and heart,
Shot; but the sidelong arrow slid, and slew
His comrade born and loving countryman,
Under the left arm smitten, as he no less
Poised a like arrow; and bright blood break afoam,
And falling, and weighed back by clamorous arms,
Sharp rang the dead limbs of Eurytion.
Then one shot happier, the Cadmean seer,
Amphiaraus; for his sacred shaft
Pierced the red circlet of one ravening eye
Beneath the brute brows of the sanguine boar,
Now bloodier from one slain; but he so galled
Sprang straight, and rearing cried no lesser cry
Than thunder and the roar of wintering streams
That mix their own foam with the yellower sea;
And as a tower that falls by fire in fight
With ruin of walls and all its archery,
And breaks the iron flower of war beneath,
Crushing charred limbs and molten arms of men;
So through crushed branches and the reddening brake
Clamored and crashed the fervor of his feet,
And trampled, springing sideways from the tusk,
Too tardy a moving mould of heavy strength,
Ancæus; and as flakes of weak-winged snow
Break, all the hard thews of his heaving limbs
Broke, and rent flesh fell every way, and blood
Flew, and fierce fragments of no more a man.
Then all the heroes drew sharp breath, and gazed,
And smote not; but Meleager, but thy son,

Right in the wild way of the coming curse
Rock-rooted, fair with fierce and fastened lips,
Clear eyes, and springing muscle and shortening limb—
With chin aslant indrawn to a tightening throat,
Grave, and with gathered sinews, like a god,—
Aimed on the left side his well-handled spear
Grasped where the ash was knottiest hewn, and smote,
And with no missile wound, the monstrous boar
Right in the hairiest hollow of his hide
Under the last rib, sheer through bulk and bone
Deep in; and deeply smitten, and to death,
The heavy horror with his hanging shafts
Leapt, and fell furiously, and from raging lips
Foamed out the latest wrath of all his life.
And all they praised the gods with mightier heart,
Zeus and all gods, but chiefliest Artemis,
Seeing; but Meleager bade whet knives and flay,
Strip and stretch out the splendor of the spoil;
And hot and horrid from the work all these
Sat, and drew breath and drank and made great cheer
And washed the hard sweat off their calmer brows.
For much sweet grass grew higher than grew the reed,
And good for slumber, and every holier herb,
Narcissus, and the low-lying melilote,
And all of goodliest blade and bloom that springs
Where, hid by heavier hyacinth, violet buds
Blossom and burn; and fire of yellower flowers
And light of crescent lilies, and such leaves
As fear the Faun's and know the Dryad's foot;
Olive and ivy and poplar dedicate,
And many a wellspring overwatched of these.
There now they rest; but me the king bade bear
Good tidings to rejoice this town and thee.
Wherefore be glad, and all ye give much thanks
For fallen is all the trouble of Calydon.

ALTHÆA.

Laud ye the gods; for this they have given is good
And what shall be they hide until their time.
Much good and somewhat grievous hast thou said,
And either well; but let all sad things be,
Till all have made before the prosperous gods
Burnt-offering, and poured out the floral wine.
Look fair, O gods, and favorable; for we
Praise you with no false heart or flattering mouth
Being merciful, but with pure souls and prayer.

HERALD.

Thou hast prayed well; for whoso fears not these,
But once being prosperous waxes huge of heart,
Him shall some new thing unaware destroy.

CHORUS.

O that I now, I too were
By deep wells and water-floods,
Streams of ancient hills, and where
All the wan green places bear
Blossoms cleaving to the sod,
Fruitless fruit, and grasses fair
Or such darkest ivy-buds
As divide thy yellow hair,
Bacchus, and their leaves that nod
Round thy fawnskin brush the bare
Snow-soft shoulders of a god;
There the year is sweet, and there
Earth is full of secret springs,
And the fervent rose-checked hours,
Those that marry dawn and noon,
There are sunless, there look pale
In dim leaves and hidden air,
Pale as grass or latter flowers
Or the wild vine's wan wet rings
Full of dew beneath the moon,
And all day the nightingale
Sleeps, and all night sings;
There in cold remote recesses

That nor alien eye assail,
Feet, nor imminence of wings.
Nor a wind nor any tune,
Thou, O queen and holiest,
Flower the whitest of all things,
With reluctant lengthening tresses
And with sudden splendid breast
Save of maidens unbeholden,
There are wont to enter, there
Thy divine sweet limbs and golden
Maiden growth of unbound hair,
Bathed in waters white,
Shine, and many a maid's by thee
In moist woodland or the hilly
Flowerless brakes where wells abound
Out of all men's sight;
Or in lower pools that see
All their marges clothed all round
With the innumerable lily,
Whence the golden-girdled bee
Flits through flowering rush to fret
White or duskier violet,
Fair as those that in far years
With their buds left luminous
And their little leaves made wet
From the warmer dew of tears,
Mother's tears in extreme need,
Hid the limbs of Iamus,
Of thy brother's seed;
For his heart was piteous
Toward him, even as thine heart now
Pitiful toward us;
Thine, O goddess, turning hither
A benignant blameless brow;
Seeing enough of evil done
And lives withered as leaves wither
In the blasting of the sun;
Seeing enough of hunters dead,
Ruin enough of all our year,
Herds and harvests slain and shed
Herdsmen stricken many an one,
Fruits and flocks consumed together,
And great length of deadly days.
Yet with reverent lips and fear
Turn we toward thee, turn and praise
For this lightening of clear weather
And prosperities begun.
For not seldom, when all air
As bright water without breath
Shines, and when men fear not, fate
Without thunder unaware
Breaks, and brings down death.
Joy with grief ye great gods give,
Good with bad, and overbear
All the pride of us that live,
All the high estate,
As ye long since overbore,
As in old time long before,
Many a strong man and a great,
All that were.
But do thou, sweet, otherwise,
Having heed of all our prayer,
Taking note of all our sighs;
We beseech thee by thy light,
By thy bow, and thy sweet eyes,
And the kingdom of the night,
Be thou favorable and fair;
By thine arrows and thy might
And Orion overthrown;
By the maiden thy delight,
By the indissoluble zone
And the sacred hair.

MESSENGER.

Maidens, if ye will sing now, shift your song,
Bow down, cry, wail for pity; is this a time
For singing? nay, for strewing of dust and ash,
Rent raiment, and for bruising of the breast.

CHORUS.

What new thing wolf-like lurks behind thy words?
What snake's tongue in thy lips? what fire in the eyes?

MESSENGER.

Bring me before the queen and I will speak.

CHORUS.

Lo, she comes forth as from thank-offering made.

MESSENGER.

A barren offering for a bitter gift!

ALTHÆA.

What are these borne on branches, and the face
Covered? no mean men living, but now slain
Such honor have they, if any dwell with death.

MESSENGER.

Queen, thy twain brethren and thy mother's sons.

ALTHÆA.

Lay down your dead till I behold their blood
If it be mine indeed, and I will weep.

MESSENGER.

Weep if thou wilt, for these men shall no more.

ALTHÆA.

O brethren, O my father's sons, of me
Well loved and well reputed, I should weep
Tears dearer than the dear blood drawn from you
But that I know you not uncomforted,
Sleeping no shameful sleep, however slain,
For my son surely hath avenged you dead.

MESSENGER.

Nay, should thine own seed slay himself, O queen?

ALTHÆA.

Thy double word brings forth a double death.

MESSENGER.

Know this then singly, by one hand they fell.

ALTHÆA.

What mutterest thou with thine ambiguous mouth?

MESSENGER.

Slain by thy son's hand; is that saying so hard?

ALTHÆA.

Our time is come upon us: it is here.

CHORUS.

O miserable, and spoiled at thine own hand.

ALTHÆA.

Wert thou not called Meleager from this womb?

CHORUS.

A grievous huntsman hath it bred to thee.

ALTHÆA.

Wert thou born fire, and shalt thou not devour?

CHORUS.

The fire thou madest, will it consume even thee?

ALTHÆA.

My dreams are fallen upon me; burn thou too.

CHORUS.

Not without God are visions born and die.

ALTHÆA.

The gods are many about me; I ar one.

CHORUS.

She groans as men wrestling with heavier gods.

ALTHÆA

They rend me, they divide me, they destroy.

CHORUS.

Or one laboring in travail of strange births.

ALTHÆA.

They are strong, they are strong; I am broken, and these prevail.

CHORUS.

The god is great against her; she will die.

ALTHÆA.

Yea, but not now; for my heart too is great.
I would I were not here in sight of the sun.
But thou, speak all thou sawest, and I will die.

MESSENGER.

O queen, for queenlike hast thou borne thyself,
A little word may hold so great mischance.
For in division of the sanguine spoil
These men thy brethren wrangling bade yield up
The boar's head and the horror of the hide,
That this might stand a wonder in Calydon,
Hallowed; and some drew toward them: but thy son,
With great hands grasping all that weight of hair,
Cast down the dead heap clanging and collapsed
At female feet, saying, This thy spoil, not mine,
Maiden, thine own hand for thyself hath reaped,

And all this praise God gives thee: she thereat
Laughed, as when dawn touches the sacred night
The sky sees laugh and redden and divide
Dim lips and eyelids virgin of the sun,
Hers, and the warm slow breasts of morning heave,
Fruitful, and flushed with flame from lamplit hours,
And maiden undulation of clear hair
Color the clouds; so laughed she from pure heart
Lit with a low blush to the braided hair,
And rose-colored and cold like very dawn,
Golden and godlike, chastely with chaste lips
A faint, grave laugh; and all they held their peace,
And she passed by them. Then one cried, Lo now,
Shall not the Arcadian shoot out lips at us,
Saying all we were despoiled by this one girl?
And all they rode against her violently
And cast the fresh crown from her hair, and now
They had rent her spoil away, dishonoring her,
Save that Meleager, as a tame lion chafed,
Bore on them, broke them, as fire cleaves wood
So clove and drove them, smitten in twain; but she
Smote not nor heaved up hand; and this man first,
Plexippus, crying out, this for Love's sake, sweet,
Drove at Meleager, who with spear straightening
Pierced his cheek through; then Toxeus made for him,
Dumb, but his spear spake; vain and violent words,
Fruitless; for him too, stricken through both sides,
The earth felt falling, and his horse's foam
Blanched thy son's face, his slayer; and these being slain,
None moved nor spake; but Œneus bade bear hence
These made of heaven infatuate in their deaths,
Foolish; for these would baffle fate, and fell,
And they passed on, and all men honored her,
Being honorable, as one revered of heaven.

ALTHÆA.

What say ye, Women? is all this not well done?

CHORUS.

No man doth well but God hath part in him.

ALTHÆA.

But no part here; for these my brethren born
Ye have no part in, these ye know not of
As I that was their sister, a sacrifice
Slain in their slaying. I would I had died for these;
For this man dead walked with me, child by child,
And made a weak staff for my feebler feet
With his own tender wrist and hand, and held
And led me softly, and showed me gold and steel
And shining shapes of mirror and bright crown
And all things fair; and threw light spears, and brought
Young hounds to huddle at my feet and thrust
Tame heads against my little maiden breasts,
And please me with great eyes; and those days went,
And these are bitter, and I a barren queen
And sister miserable, a grievous thing
And mother of many curses; and she too,
My sister Leda, sitting overseas
With fair fruits round her, and her faultless lord,
Shall curse me, saying, A sorrow and not a son,
Sister, thou barest, even a burning fire
A brand consuming thine own soul and me.
But ye now, sons of Thestius, make good cheer,
For ye shall have such wood to funeral fire

As no king hath; and flame that once burnt down
Oil shall not quicken or breath relume or wine
Refresh again; much costlier than fine gold,
And more than many lives of wandering men.

CHORUS.

O queen, thou hast yet with thee love-worthy things,
Thine husband, and the great strength of thy son.

ALTHÆA.

Who shall get brothers for me while I live?
Who bear them? who bring forth in lieu of these?
Are not our fathers and our brethren one,
And no man like them? are not mine here slain?
Have we not hung together, he and I,
Flowerwise feeding as the feeding bees,
With mother-milk for honey? and this man too,
Dead, with my son's spear thrust between his sides,
Hath he not seen us, later born than he,
Laugh with lips filled, and laughed again for love?
There were no sons then in the world, nor spears,
Nor deadly births of women; but the gods
Allowed us, and our days were clear of these.
I would I had died unwedded, and brought forth
No swords to vex the world; for these that spake
Sweet words long since and loved me will not speak
Nor love nor look upon men; and all my life
I shall not hear nor see them living men.
But I too living, how shall I now live?
What life shall this be with my son, to know
What hath been and desire what will not be,
Look for dead eyes and listen for dead lips,
And kill mine own heart with remembering them,
And with those eyes that see the slayer alive
Weep, and wring hands that clasp him by the hand?
How shall I bear my dreams of them, to hear
False voices, feel the kisses of false mouths
And footless sound of perished feet, and then
Wake and hear only it may be their own hounds
Whine masterless in miserable sleep,
And see their boar spears and their beds and seats
And all the gear and housings of their lives
And not the men? shall hounds and horses mourn,
Pine with strange eyes, and prick up hungry ears,
Famish and fail at heart for their dear lords,
And I not heed at all? and those blind things
Fall off from life for love's sake, and I live?
Surely some death is better than some life,
Better one death for him and these and me.
For if the gods had slain them it may be
I had endured it; if they had fallen by war
Or by the nets and knives of privy death
And by hired hands while sleeping, this thing too
I had set my soul to suffer; or this hunt,
Had this despatched them, under tusk or tooth,
Torn, sanguine, trodden, broken; for all deaths
Or honorable or with facile feet avenged
And hands of swift gods following, all save this,
Are bearable; but not for their sweet land
Fighting, but not a sacrifice, lo these
Dead; for I had not then shed all mine heart
Out at mine eyes: then either with good speed,
Being just, I had slain their slayer atoningly,
Or strewn with flowers their fire and on their tombs

Hung crowns, and over them a song, and seen
Their praise outflame their ashes; for all men,
All maidens, had come thither, and from pure lips
Shed songs upon them, from heroic eyes
Tears; and their death had been a deathless life;
But now, by no man hired nor alien sword,
By their own kindred are they fallen, in peace,
After much peril, friendless among friends,
By hateful hands they loved; and how shall mine
Touch these returning red and not from war,
These fatal from the vintage of men's veins,
Dead men my brethren? how shall these wash off
No festal stains of undelightful wine
How mix the blood, my blood on them, with me,
Holding mine hand? or how shall I say, son,
That am no sister? but by night and day
Shall we not sit and hate each other, and think
Things hate-worthy? not live with shamefast eyes,
Brow-beaten, treading soft with fearful feet,
Each unupbraided, each without rebuke
Convicted, and without a word reviled
Each of another? and I shall let thee live
And see thee strong and hear men for thy sake
Praise me, but these thou wouldest not let live
No man shall praise for ever? these shall lie
Dead, unbeloved, unholpen, all through thee?
Sweet were they toward me living, and mine heart
Desired them, but was then well satisfied,
That now is as men hungered; and these dead
I shall want always to the day I die
For all things else and all men may renew;
Yea, son for son the gods may give and take,
But never a brother or sister any more.

CHORUS.

Nay, for the son lies close about thine heart,
Full of thy milk, warm from thy womb, and drains
Life and blood of life and all thy fruit,
Eats thee and drinks thee as who breaks bread and eats,
Treads wine and drinks, thyself a sect of thee;
And if he feed not, shall not thy flesh faint?
Or drink not, are not thy lips dead for thirst?
This thing moves more than all things, even thy son,
That thou cleave to him; and he shall honor thee,
Thy womb that bare him and the breasts he knew,
Reverencing most for thy sake all his gods.

ALTHÆA.

But these the gods too gave me, and these my son,
Not reverencing his gods nor mine own heart
Nor the old sweet years nor all venerable things,
But cruel, and in his ravin like a beast,
Hath taken away to slay them: yea, and she,
She the strange woman, she the flower, the sword,
Red from spilt blood, a mortal flower to men,
Adorable, detestable—even she
Saw with strange eyes and with strange lips rejoiced,
Seeing these mine own slain of mine own, and me
Made miserable above all miseries made,
A grief among all women in the world,
A name to be washed out with all men's tears.

CHORUS.

Strengthen thy spirit; is this not also a god,
Chance, and the wheel of all necessities?
Hard things have fallen upon us from harsh gods,
Whom lest worse hap rebuke we not for these.

ALTHÆA.

My spirit is strong against itself, and I
For these things sake cry out on mine own soul
That it endures outrage, and dolorous days,
And life, and this inexpiable impotence.
Weak am I, weak and shameful; my breath drawn
Shames me, and monstrous things and violent gods.
What shall atone? what heal me? what bring back
Strength to the foot, light to the face? what herb
Assauge me? what restore me? what release?
What strange things eaten or drunken, O great gods,
Make me as you or as the beasts that feed,
Slay and divide and cherish their own hearts?
For these ye show us; and we less than these
Have not wherewith to live as all these things
Which all their lives fare after their own kind
As who doth well rejoicing; but we ill,
Weeping or laughing, we whom eyesight fails,
Knowledge and light of face and perfect heart,
And hands we lack, and wit; and all our days
Sin, and have hunger, and die infatuated.
For madness have ye given us and not health,
And sins whereof we know not; and for these
Death, and sudden destruction unaware.
What shall we say now? what thing comes of us?

CHORUS.

Alas, for all this all men undergo.

ALTHÆA.

Wherefore I will not that these twain, O gods,
Die as a dog dies, eaten of creeping things,
Abominable, a loathing; but though dead
Shall they have honor and such funereal flame
As strews men's ashes in their enemies' face
And blinds their eyes who hate them: lest men say,
"Lo how they lie, and living had great kin,
And none of these hath pity of them, and and none
Regards them lying, and none is wrung at heart,
None moved in spirit for them, naked and slain,
Abhorred, abased, and no tears comfort them";
And in the dark this grieve Eurythemis,
Hearing how these her sons come down to her
Unburied, unavenged, as kinless men,
And had a queen their sister. That were shame
Worse than this grief. Yet how to atone at all
I know not; seeing the love of my born son,
A new-made mother's new born-love, that grows
From the soft child to the strong man, now soft,
Now strong as either, and still one sole same love,
Strives with me, no light thing to strive withal:
This love is deep, and natural to man's blood,
And ineffaceable with many tears.
Yet shall not these rebuke me though I die.
Nor she in that waste world with all her dead,
My mother, among the pale flocks fallen as leaves,
Folds of dead people, and alien from the sun;
Nor lack some bitter comfort, some poor praise,
Being queen, to have borne her daughter like a queen,
Righteous; and though mine own fire burn me too,
She shall have honor and these her sons, though dead.
But all the gods will, all they do, and we
Not all we would, yet somewhat; and one choice
We have, to live and do just deeds and die.

CHORUS.

Terrible words she communes with, and turns
Swift fiery eyes in doubt against herself,
And murmurs as who talks in dreams with death.

ALTHÆA.

For the unjust also dieth, and him all men
Hate, and himself abhors the unrighteousness,
And seeth his own dishonor intolerable.
But I being just, doing right upon myself,
Slay mine own soul, and no man born shames me,
For none constrains nor shall rebuke, being done,
What none compelled me doing; thus these things fare
Ah, ah, that such things should so fare; ah me,
That I am found to do them and endure,
Chosen and constrained to chose, and bear myself
Mine own wound through mine own flesh to the heart
Violently stricken, a spoiler and a spoil,
A ruin ruinous, fallen on mine own son.
Ah, ah, for me too as for these; alas,
For that is done that shall be, and mine hand
Full of the deed, and full of blood mine eyes,
That shall see never nor touch anything
Save blood unstanched and fire unquenchable.

CHORUS.

What wilt thou do? what ails thee? for the house
Shakes ruinously; wilt thou bring fire for it?

ALTHÆA.

Fire in the roofs, and on the lintels fire.
Lo ye, who stand and weave, between the doors,
There; and blood drips from hand and thread, and stains
Threshold and raiment and me passing in
Flecked with the sudden sanguine drops of death.

CHORUS.

Alas that time is stronger than strong men,
Fate than all gods: and these are all fallen on us.

ALTHÆA.

A little since and I was glad; and now
I never shall be glad or sad again.

CHORUS.

Between two joys a grief grows unaware

ALTHÆA.

A little while and I shall laugh; and then
I shall weep never and laugh not any more.

CHORUS.

What shall be said? for words are thorns to grief.
Withhold thyself a little and fear the gods.

ALTHÆA.

Fear died when these were slain; and I am as dead.
And fear is of the living; these fear none.

CHORUS.

Have pity upon all people for their sake.

ALTHÆA.

It is done now; shall I put back my day?

CHORUS.

And end is come, an end; this is of God.

ALTHÆA.

I am fire, and burn myself; keep clear of fire.

CHORUS.

The house is broken, is broken; it shall not stand.

ALTHÆA.

Woe, woe for him that breaketh; and a rod
Smote it of old, and now the axe is here.

CHORUS.

Not as with sundering of the earth
Nor as with cleaving of the sea
Nor fierce foreshadowings of a birth
Nor flying dreams of death to be
Nor loosening of the large world's girth
And quickening of the body of night,
And sound of thunder in men's ears
And fire of lightning in men's sight,
Fate, mother of desires and fears,

Bore unto men the law of tears;
But sudden, an unfathered flame,
And broken out of night, she shone,
She, without body, without name,
In days forgotten and foregone;
And heaven rang round her as she came
Like smitten cymbals, and lay bare;
Clouds and great stars, thunders and snows,
The blue sad fields and folds of air,
The life that breathes, the life that grows,
All wind, all fire, that burns or blows,
Even all these knew her: for she is great;
The daughter of doom, the mother of death
The sister of sorrow; a lifelong weight
That no man's finger lighteneth,
Nor any god can lighten fate;
A landmark seen across the way
Where one race treads as the other trod;
An evil sceptre, an evil stay,
Wrought for a staff, wrought for a rod,
The bitter jealousy of God.
For death is deep as the sea,
And fate as the waves thereof.
Shall the waves take pity on thee
Or the south-wind offer thee love?
Wilt thou take the night for thy day
Or the darkness for light on thy way
Till thou say in thine heart, Enough?
Behold, thou art over fair, thou art over wise;
The sweetness of spring in thine hair, and the light in thine eyes.
The light of the spring in thine eyes, and the sound in thine ears;
Yet thine heart shall wax heavy with sighs and thine eyelids with tears.
Wilt thou cover thine hair with gold; and with silver thy feet?
Hast thou taken the purple to fold thee, and made thy mouth sweet?
Behold, when thy face is made bare, he that loved thee shall hate;
Thy face shall be no more fair at the fall of thy fate.
For thy life shall fall as a leaf and be shed as the rain;
And the veil of thine head shall be grief; and the crown shall be pain.

ALTHÆA.

O ye that wail, and ye that sing, make way
Till I be come among you. Hide your tears,
Ye little weepers, and your laughing lips,
Ye laughers for a little; lo mine eyes
That outweep heaven at rainiest, and my mouth
That laughs as gods laugh at us. Fate's are we,
Yet fate is ours a breathing-space; yea, mine,
Fate is made mine forever; he is my son,
My bedfellow, my brother. You strong gods,
Give place unto me; I am as any of you,
To give life and to take life. Thou old earth,
That hast made man and unmade; thou whose mouth
Looks red from the eaten fruits of thine own womb;
Behold me with what lips upon what food
I feed and fill my body, even with flesh
Made of my body. Lo, the fire I lit
I burn with fire to quench it; yea, with flame
I burn up even the dust and ash thereof.

CHORUS.

Woman, what fire is this thou burnest with?

ALTHÆA.

Yea to the bone, yea to the blood and all.

CHORUS.

For this thy face and hair are as one fire.

ALTHÆA.

A tongue that licks and beats upon the dust.

CHORUS.

And in thine eyes are hollow light and heat.

ALTHÆA.

Of flame not fed with hand or frankincense.

CHORUS.

I fear thee for the trembling of thine eyes.

ALTHÆA.

Neither with love they tremble nor for

CHORUS.

And thy mouth shuddering like a shot bird.

ALTHÆA.

Not as the bride's mouth when the man kisses it.

CHORUS.

Nay, but what thing is this thing thou hast done?

ALTHÆA.

Look, I am silent, speak your eyes for me.

CHORUS.

I see a faint fire lightening from the hall.

ALTHÆA.

Gaze, stretch your eyes, strain till the lids drop off.

CHORUS.

Flushed pillars down the flickering vestibule.

ALTHÆA.

Stretch with your necks like birds: cry, chirp as they.

CHORUS.

And a long brand that blackens: and white dust.

ALTHÆA.

O children, what is this ye see? your eyes
Are blinder than night's face at fall of moon,
That is my son, my flesh, my fruit of life,
My travail, and the year's weight of my womb.
Meleager, a fire enkindled of mine hands,
And of mine hands extinguished; this is he.

CHORUS.

O gods, what word has flown out at thy mouth?

ALTHÆA.

I did this and I say this and I die.

CHORUS.

Death stands upon the doorway of thy lips,
And in thy mouth has death set up his house.

ALTHÆA.

O death, a little, a little while, sweet death,
Until I see the brand burnt down and die.

CHORUS.

She reels as any reed under the wind,
And cleaves unto the ground with staggering feet.

ALTHÆA.

Girls, one thing will I say and hold my peace.
I that did this will weep not nor cry out,
Cry ye and weep: I will not call on gods,
Call ye on them; I will not pity man,
Shew ye your pity. I know not if I live;
Save that I feel the fire upon my face
And on my cheek the burning of a brand.
Yea the smoke bites me, yea I drink the steam
With nostril and with eyelid and with lip
Insatiate and intolerant; and mine hands
Burn, and fire feeds upon mine eyes; I reel
As one made drunk with living, whence he draws
Drunken delight; yet I though mad for joy,
Loathe my long living and am waxen red
As with the shadow of shed blood; behold,
I am kindled with the flames that fade in him,
I am swollen with subsiding of his veins,
I am flooded with his ebbing; my lit eyes
Flame with the falling fire that leaves his lids
Bloodless; my cheek is luminous with blood
Because his face is ashen. Yet, O child,
Son, first-born, fairest—O sweet mouth, sweet eyes,
That drew my life out through my suckling breast,
That shone and clove my heart through,—O soft knees
Clinging, O tender treadings of soft feet,
Cheeks warm with little kissings,—O child, child,
What have we made each other? Lo, I felt
Thy weight cleave to me, a burden of beauty, O son,

Thy cradled brows and loveliest loving lips,
The floral hair, the little lightening eyes,
And all thy goodly glory: with mine hands
Delicately I fed thee, with my tongue
Tenderly spake, saying, Verily in God's time,
For all the little likeness of thy limbs,
Son, I shall make thee a kingly man to fight,
A lordly leader; and hear before I die,
"She bore the goodliest sword of all the world,"
Oh! oh! For all my life turns round on me;
I am severed from myself, my name is gone,
My name that was a healing, it is changed,
My name is a consuming. From this time,
Though mine eyes reach to the end of all these things,
My lips shall not unfasten till I die.

SEMICHORUS.

She has filled with sighing the city,
And the ways thereof with tears;
She arose, she girdled her sides,
She set her face as a bride's;
She wept, and she had no pity;
Trembled and felt no fears.

SEMICHORUS.

Her eyes were clear as the sun,
Her brows were fresh as the day;
She girdled herself with gold,
Her robes were manifold;
But the days of her worship are done,
Her praise is taken away.

SEMICHORUS.

For she set her hand to the fire;
With her mouth she kindled the same;
As the mouth of a flute-player,
So was the mouth of her;
With the might of her strong desire
She blew the breath of the flame.

SEMICHORUS.

She set her hand to the wood,
She took the fire in her hand;
As one who is nigh to death,
She panted with strange breath;
She opened her lips unto blood,
She breathed and kindled the brand

SEMICHORUS.

As wood-dove newly shot,
She sobbed and lifted her breast;
She sighed and covered her eyes,
Filling her lips with sighs;
She sighed, she withdrew herself not,
She refrained not, taking not rest;

SEMICHORUS.

But as the wind which is drouth,
And as the air which is death,
As storm that severeth ships,
Her breath severing her lips,
The breath came forth of her mouth
And the fire came forth of her breath.

SECOND MESSENGER.

Queen, and you maidens, there is come on us
A thing more deadly than the face of death;
Meleager the good lord is as one slain.

SEMICHORUS.

Without sword, without sword is he stricken;
Slain, and slain without hand.

SECOND MESSENGER.

For as keen ice divided of the sun
His limbs divide, and as thawed snow the flesh
Thaws from off all his body to the hair.

SEMICHORUS.

He wastes as the embers quicken;
With the brand he fades as a brand.

SECOND MESSENGER.

Even while they sang and all drew hither and he
Lifted both hands to crown the Arcadian's hair
And fix the looser leaves, both hands fell down.

SEMICHORUS.

With rending of cheek and of hair
Lament ye, mourn for him, weep.

SECOND MESSENGER.

Straightway the crown slid off and smote on earth.
First fallen; and he, grasping his own hair, groaned

And cast his raiment round his face and fell.

SEMICHORUS.

Alas for visions that were,
And soothsayings spoken in sleep.

SECOND MESSENGER.

But the king twitched his reins in and leapt down
And caught him, crying out twice, "O child," and thrice
So that men's eyelids thickened with their tears.

SEMICHORUS.

Lament with a long lamentation,
Cry, for an end is at hand.

SECOND MESSENGER.

O son, he said, son, lift thine eyes, draw breath,
Pity me; but Meleager with sharp lips
Gasped, and his face waxed like as sunburnt grass.

SEMICHORUS.

Cry aloud, O thou kingdom, O nation,
O stricken, a ruinous land.

SECOND MESSENGER.

Whereat king Œnus, straightening feeble knees.
With feeble hands heaved up a lessening weight,
And laid him sadly in strange hands, and wept.

SEMICHORUS.

Thou art smitten, her lord, her desire,
Thy dear blood wasted as rain.

SECOND MESSENGER.

And they with tears and rendings of the beard
Bear hither a breathing body, wept upon.
And lightening at each footfall, sick to death.

SEMICHORUS.

Thou madest thy sword as a fire,
With fire for a sword thou art slain.

SECOND MESSENGER.

And lo the feast turned funeral and the crowns
Fallen; and the huntress and the hunter trapped;
And weeping and changed faces and veiled hair.

MELEAGER.

Let your hands meet
Round the weight of my head
Lift ye my feet
As the feet of the dead;
For the flesh of my body is molten, the limbs of it molten as lead.

CHORUS.

O thy luminous face,
Thine imperious eyes!
O the grief, O the grace,
As of the day when it dies!
Who is this bending over thee, lord, with tears and suppression of sighs!

MELEAGER,

Is a bride so fair?
Is a maid so meek?
With unchapleted hair
With unfilleted cheek,
Atalanta, the pure among women, whose name is as blessing to speak.

ATALANTA.

I would that with feet,
Unsandled, unshod.
Overbold, overfleet,
I had swum not nor trod
From Arcadia to Calydon, northward, a blast of the envy of God.

MELEAGER.

Unto each man his fate;
Unto each as he saith
In whose fingers the weight
Of the world is as breath;
Yet I would that in clamor of battle mine hands had laid hold upon death.

CHORUS.

Not with cleaving of shields
And their clash in thine ear,
When the lord of fought fields
Breaketh spearshaft from spear,
Thou art broken, our lord, thou art broken, with travail and labor and fear.

MELEAGER.

Would God he had found me
Beneath fresh boughs!

Would God he had bound me
Unawares in mine house,
With light in mine eyes, and songs in my lips, and a crown on my brows!

CHORUS.

Whence art thou sent from us?
Whither thy goal?
How art thou rent from us,
Thou that wert whole,
As with severing of eyelids and eyes, as with sundering of body and soul!

MELEAGER.

My heart is within me
As an ash in the fire;
Whosoever hath seen me,
Without lute, without lyre,
Shall sing of me grievous things, even things that were ill to desire.

CHORUS.

Who shall raise thee.
From the house of the dead?
Or what man praise thee
That thy praise may be said?
Alas thy beauty! alas thy body! alas thine head!

MELEAGER.

But thou, O mother,
That dreamer of dreams,
Wilt thou bring forth another
To feel the sun's beams
When I move among shadows a shadow, and wail by impassable streams?

ŒNEUS.

What thing wilt thou leave me
Now this thing is done?
A man wilt thou give me,
A son for my son,
For the light of mine eyes, the desire of my life, the desirable one?

CHORUS.

Thou wert glad above others,
Yea, fair beyond word;
Thou wert glad among mothers;
For each man that heard
Of thee, praise there was added unto thee, as wings to the feet of a bird.

ŒNEUS.

Who shall give back
Thy face of old years,
With travail made black,
Grown gray among fears,
Mother of sorrow, mother of cursing, mother of tears?

MELEAGER.

Though thou art as fire
Fed with fuel in vain,
My delight, desire,
Is more chaste than the rain,
More pure than the dewfall, more holy than stars are that live without stain.

ATALANTA.

I would that as water
My life's blood had thawn,
Or as winter's wan daughter
Leaves lowland and lawn
Spring-stricken, or ever mine eyes had beheld thee made dark in thy dawn.

CHORUS.

When thou dravest the men
Of the chosen of Thrace,
None turned him again
Nor endured he thy face
Clothed round with the blush of the battle, with light from a terrible place,

ŒNEUS.

Thou shouldst die as he dies
For whom none sheddeth tears;
Filling thine eyes
And fulfilling thine ears.
With the brilliance of battle, the bloom and the beauty, the splendor of spears.

CHORUS.

In the ears of the world
It is sung, it is told,
And the light thereof hurled
And the noise thereof rolled
From the Acroceraunian snow to the ford of the fleece of gold.

MELEAGER.

Would God ye could carry me
Forth of all these;
Heap sand and bury me
By the Chersonese
Where the thundering Bosphorus answers the thunder of Pontic seas.

ŒNEUS.

Dost thou mock at our praise
And the singing begun

And the men of strange days
Praising my son
In the folds of the hills of home, high places of Calydon?

MELEAGER.

For the dead man no home is;
Ah, better to be
What the flower of the foam is
In fields of the sea,
That the sea-waves might be as my raiment, the gulf-stream a garment for me.

CHORUS.

Who shall seek thee and bring
And restore thee thy day,
When the dove dipt her wing
And the oars won their way,
Where the narrowing Symplegades whitened the straits of Propontis with spray?

MELEAGER.

Will ye crown me my tomb
Or exalt me my name,
Now my spirits consume
Now my flesh is a flame?
Let the sea slake it once, and men speak of me sleeping to praise me or shame.

CHORUS.

Turn back now, turn thee,
As who turns him to wake;
Though the life in thee burn thee,
Couldst thou bathe it and slake
Where the sea-ridge of Helle hangs heavier, and east upon west waters break?

MELEAGER.

Would the winds blow me back
Or the waves hurl me home?
Ah, to touch in the track
Where the pine learnt to roam
Cold girdles and crowns of the sea gods, cool blossoms of water and foam!

CHORUS.

The gods may release
That they made fast;
Thy soul shall have ease
In thy limbs at the last;
But what shall they give thee for life, sweet life that is overpast?

MELEAGER.

Not the life of men's veins,
Not of flesh that conceives;
But the grace that remains,
The fair beauty that cleaves
To the life of the rains in the grasses, the life of the dews on the leaves.

CHORUS.

Thou wert helmsman and chief;
Wilt thou turn in an hour,
Thy limbs to the leaf,
Thy face to the flower,
Thy blood to the water, thy soul to the gods who divide and devour?

MELEAGER.

The years are hungry,
They wail all their days;
The gods wax angry
And weary of praise;
And who shall bridle their lips? and who shall straiten their ways?

CHORUS.

The gods guard over us
With sword and with rod;
Weaving shadow to cover us,
Heaping the sod,
That law may fulfil herself wholly, to darken man's face before God.

MELEAGER.

O holy head from the holy
Guiltless, yet red from alien guilt, yet foul
With kinship of contaminated lives,
Lo for their blood I die; and mine own blood
For bloodshedding of mine is mixed therewith,
That death may not discern me from mine kin.
Yet with clean heart I die and faultless hand,
Not shamefully; thou therefore of thy love
Salute me, and bid fare among the dead
Well, as the dead fare; for the best man dead
Fares sadly; nathless I now faring well
Pass without fear where nothing is to fear,
Having thy love about me and thy goodwill,
O father, among dark places and men dead.

ŒNEUS.

Child, I salute thee with sad heart and tears,
And bid thee comfort, being a perfect man
In fight, and honorable in the house of peace.
The gods give thee fair wage and dues of death,
And me brief days and ways to come at thee.

MELEAGER.

Pray thou thy days be long before thy death,
And full of ease and kingdom; seeing in death
There is no comfort and none aftergrowth,
Nor shall one thence look up and see day's dawn
Nor light upon the land whither I go.
Live thou and take thy fill of days and die
When thy day comes; and make not much of death
Lest ere thy day thou reap an evil thing.
Thou, too, the bitter mother and mother-plague
Of this my weary body,—thou too, queen,
The source and end, the sower and the scythe,
The rain that ripens and the drought that slays,
The sand that swallows and the spring that feeds,
To make me and unmake me,—thou, I say,
Althæa, since my father's ploughshare, drawn
Through fatal seedland of a female field,
Furrowed thy body, whence a wheaten ear
Strong from the sun and fragrant from the rains
I sprang and cleft the closure of thy womb,
Mother, I dying with unforgetful tongue
Hail thee as holy and worship thee as just
Who art unjust and unholy; and with my knees
Would worship, but thy fire and subtlety,
Dissundering them, devour me; for these limbs
Are as light dust and crumblings from mine urn
Before the fire has touched them; and my face
As a dead leaf or dead foot's mark on snow,
And all this body a broken barren tree
That was so strong, and all this flower of life
Disbranched and desecrated miserably,
And minished all that god-like muscle and might
And lesser than a man's: for all my veins
Fail me, and all mine ashen life burns down.
I would thou hadst let me live; but gods averse,
But fortune, and the fiery feet of change,
And time, these would not, these tread out my life,
These, and not thou; me, too, thou hast loved, and I
Thee; but this death was mixed with all my life,
Mine end with my beginning; and this law,
This only, slays me, and not my mother at all.
And let no brother or sister grieve too sore,
Nor melt their hearts out on me with their tears,
Since extreme love and sorrowing overmuch
Vex the great gods, and overloving men
Slay and are slain for love's sake; and this house
Shall bear much better children; why should these
Weep? but in patience let them live their lives
And mine pass by forgotten: thou alone,
Mother, thou sole and only, thou not these,
Keep me in mind a little when I die
Because I was thy first-born; let thy soul
Pity me, pity even me gone hence and dead,
Though thou wert wroth, and though thou bear again
Much happier sons, and all men later born
Exceedingly excel me; yet do thou
Forget not, nor think shame; I was thy son.

Time was I did not shame thee; and time was
I thought to live and make thee honorable
With deeds as great as these men's; but they live,
These, and I die; and what thing should have been
Surely I know not; yet I charge thee, seeing
I am dead already, love me not the less,
Me, O my mother; I charge thee by these gods,
My father's, and that holier breast of thine,
By these that see me dying, and that which nursed,
Love me not less, thy first-born: though grief come,
Grief only, of me, and of all these great joy,
And shall come always to thee; for thou knowest
O mother, O breasts that bare me, for ye know
O sweet head of my mother, sacred eyes,
Ye know my soul albeit I sinned, ye know
Albeit I kneel not neither touch thy knees,
But with my lips I kneel, and with my heart
I fall about thy feet and worship thee.
And ye, farewell now, all my friends; and ye,
Kinsmen, much younger and glorious more than I
Sons of my mother's sister; and all farewell
That were in Colchis with me, and bare down
The waves and wars that met us and though times
Change, and though now I be not anything,
Forget not me among you, what I did
In my good time; for even by all those days,
Those days and this, and your own living souls,
And by the light and luck of you that live,
And by this miserable spoil, and me
Dying, I beseech you, let my name not die.

But thou, dear, touch me with thy rose-like hands,
And fasten up mine eyelids with thy mouth,
A bitter kiss; and grasp me with thine arms
Printing with heavy lips my light waste flesh,
Made light and thin by heavy-handed fate,
And with thine holy maiden eyes drop dew,
Drop tears for dew upon me who am dead,
Me who have loved thee; seeing without sin done
I am gone down to the empty weary house
Where no flesh is nor beauty nor swift eyes
Nor sound of mouth nor might of hands and feet,
But thou, dear, hide my body with thy veil,
And with thy raiment cover foot and head,
And stretch thyself upon me and touch hands
With hands and lips with lips: be pitiful
As thou art maiden perfect; let no man
Defile me to despise me, saying, This man
Die woman-wise, a woman's offering, slain
Through female fingers in his woof of life,
Dishonorable; for thou hast honored me,
And now for God's sake kiss me once and twice
And let me go; for the night gathers me
And in the night shall no man gather fruit.

ATALANTA.

Hail thou: but I with heavy face and feet
Turn homeward and am gone out of thine eyes.

CHORUS.

Who shall contend with his lords
  Or cross them or do them wrong?
Who shall bind them as with cords?
  Who shall tame them as with song?
Who shall smite them as with swords?
  For the hands of their kingdom are strong.

ERECHTHEUS:

A TRAGEDY.

αἵ ταί λιπαραὶ καὶ ἰοστέφανοι καὶ ἀοίδιμοι,
Ἑλλάδος ἔρεισμα, κλειναὶ Ἀθᾶναι, δαιμόνιον πτολίεθρον.

PIND. *Fr.* 47.

ΑΤ. τίς δὲ ποιμάνωρ ἔπεστι καὶπιδεσπόζει στρατοῦ;
ΧΟ. οὔτινος δοῦλοι κέκλη, ται φωτὸς οὐδ' ὑπήκοοι.

ÆSCH. *Pers.* 241–2.

PERSONS.

ERECHTHEUS.
CHORUS OF ATHENIAN ELDERS.
PRAXITHEA.
CHTHONIA.
HERALD OF EUMOLPUS.
MESSENGER.
ATHENIAN HERALD.
ATHENA.

ERECHTHEUS.

MOTHER of life and death and all men's days,
Earth, whom I chief of all men born would bless,
And call thee with more loving lips than theirs
Mother, for of this very body of thine
And living blood I have my breath and live,
Behold me, even thy son, me crowned of men,
Me made thy child by that strong cunning God
Who fashions fire and iron, who begat
Me for a sword and beacon-fire on thee,
Me fostering of Pallas, in her shade
Reared, that I first might pay the nursing debt,
Hallowing her fame with flower of third-year feasts,
And first bow down the bridled strength of steeds
To lose the wild wont of their birth, and bear
Clasp of man's knees and steerage of his hand,
Or fourfold service of his fire-swift wheels

That whirl the four-yoked chariot; me the king
Who stand before thee naked now, and cry,
O holy and general mother of all men born,
But mother most and motherliest of mine,
Earth, for I ask thee rather of all the Gods,
What have we done? what word mistimed or work
Hath winged the wild feet of this timeless curse
To fall as fire upon us? Lo, I stand
Here on this brow's crown of the city's head
That crowns its lovely body, till death's hour
Waste it; but now the dew of dawn and birth
Is fresh upon it from thy womb, and we
Behold it born how beauteous; one day more
I see the world's wheel of the circling sun
Roll up rejoicing to regard on earth
This one thing goodliest, fair as heaven or he,
Worth a God's gaze or strife of Gods; but now
Would this day's ebb of their spent wave of strife
Sweep it to sea, wash it on wreck, and leave
A costless thing contemned; and in our stead,
Where these walls were and sounding streets of men,
Make wide a waste for tongueless water-herds
And spoil of ravening fishes; that no more
Should men say, Here was Athens. This shalt thou
Sustain not, nor thy son endure to see,
Nor thou to live and look on; for the womb
Bare me not base that bare me miserable,
To hear this loud brood of the Thracian foam
Break its broad strength of billowy-beating war
Here, and upon it as a blast of death
Blowing, the keen wrath of a fire-souled king,
A strange growth grafted on our natural soil,
A root of Thrace in Eleusinian earth
Set for no comfort to the kindly land,
Son of the sea's lord and our first-born foe,
Eumolpus; nothing sweet in ears of thine
The music of his making, nor a song
Toward hopes of ours auspicious; for the note
Rings as for death oracular to thy sons
That goes before him on the sea-wind blown
Full of this charge laid on me, to put out
The brief light kindled of mine own child's life,
Or with this helmsman hand that steers the state
Run right on the under shoal and ridge of death
The populous ship with all its fraughtage gone
And sails that were to take the wind of time
Rent, and the tackling that should hold out fast
In confluent surge of loud calamities
Broken, with spars of rudders and lost oars
That were to row toward harbor and find rest
In some most glorious haven of all the world
And else may never near it: such a song
The Gods have set his lips on fire withal
Who threatens now in all their names to bring
Ruin; but none of these, thou knowest, have I
Chid with my tongue or cursed at heart for grief,
Knowing how the soul runs reinless on sheer death
Whose grief or joy takes part against the Gods.
And what they will is more than our desire,
And their desire is more than what we will.
For no man's will and no desire of man's
Shall stand as doth a God's will. Yet, O fair
Mother, that seest me how I cast no word
Against them, plead no reason, crave no cause,
Boast me not blameless, nor beweep me wronged,
By this fair wreath of towers we have decked thee with,
This chaplet that we give thee woven of walls,
This girdle of gate and temple and citadel
Drawn round beneath thy bosom, and fast linked
As to thine heart's root—this dear crown of thine,
This present light, this city—be not thou
Slow to take heed nor slack to strengthen her.
Fare we so short-lived howsoe'er, and pay
What price we may to ransom thee thy town,
Not me my life; but thou that diest not, thou,
Though all our house die for this people's sake
Keep thou for ours thy crown our city, guard
And give it life the lovelier that we died.

CHORUS.

Sun, that hast lightened and loosed by thy might
Ocean and Earth from the lordship of night,
Quickening with vision his eye that was veiled,
Freshening the force in her heart that had failed,
That sister fettered and blinded brother
Should have sight by thy grace and delight of each other,
Behold now and see
What profit is given them of thee;
What wrath has enkindled with madness of mind

Her limbs that were bounden, his face that was blind,
To be locked as in wrestle together, and lighten
With fire that shall darken thy fire in the sky,
Body to body and eye against eye
In a war against kind,
Till the bloom of her fields and her high hills whiten
With the foam of his waves more high.
For the sea-marks set to divide of old
The kingdoms to Ocean and Earth assigned,
The hoar sea-fields from the cornfields' gold,
His wine-bright waves from her vineyards' fold,
Frail forces we find
To bridle the spirit of Gods or bind
Till the heat of their hearts wax cold.
But the peace that was stablished between them to stand
Is rent now in twain by the strength of his hand
Who stirs up the storm of his sons overbold
To pluck from fight what he lost of right,
By council and judgment of Gods that spake
And gave great Pallas the strife's fair stake,
The lordship and love of the lovely land,
The grace of the town that hath on it for crown
But a headband to wear
Of violets one-hued with her hair:
For the vales and the green high places of earth
Holds nothing so fair,
And the depths of the sea bear no such birth
Of the manifold births they bear.
Too well, too well was the great stake worth
A strife divine for the Gods to judge,
A crowned God's triumph, a foiled God's grudge,
Though the loser be strong and the victress wise
Who played so long since for so large a prize,
The fruitful immortal anointed adored
Dear city of men without master or lord,
Fair fortress and fostress of sons born free,
Who stand in her sight and in thine, O sun,
Slaves of no man, subjects of none;
A wonder enthroned on the hills and sea,
A maiden crowned with a fourfold glory
That none from the pride of her head may rend,
Violet and olive-leaf purple and hoary,
Song-wreath and story the fairest of fame,
Flowers that the winter can blast not or bend;
A light upon earth as the sun's own flame,
A name as his name,
Athens, a praise without end.

A noise is arisen against us of waters,
A sound as of battle come up from the sea.
Strange hunters are hard on us, hearts without pity;
They have staked their nets round the fair young city,
That the sons of her strength and her virgin daughters
Should find not whither alive to flee.
And we know not yet of the word unwritten,
The doom of the Pythian we have not heard:
From the navel of earth and the veiled mid altar
We wait for a token with hopes that falter,
With fears that hang on our hearts thought-smitten
Lest her tongue be kindled with no good word.
O thou not born of the womb, nor bred
In the bride-night's warmth of a changed God's bed,
But thy life as a lightning was flashed from the light of thy father's head,
O chief God's child by a motherless birth,
If aught in thy sight we indeed be worth,
Keep death from us thou, that art none of the Gods of the dead under earth.
Thou that hast power on us, save, if thou wilt;
Let the blind wave breach not thy wall scarce built;
But bless us not so as by bloodshed, impute not for grace to us guilt,
Nor by price of pollution of blood set us free;
Let the hands be taintless that clasp thy knee,
Nor a maiden be slain to redeem for a maiden her shrine from the sea.
O earth, O sun, turn back
Full on his deadly track
Death, that would smite you black and mar your creatures,
And with one hand disroot
All tender flower and fruit,
With one strike blind and mute the heaven's fair features,
Pluck out the eyes of morn, and make
Silence in the east and blackness whence the bright songs break.
Help, earth, help, heaven, that hear
The song-notes of our fear,
Shrewd notes and shrill, not clear or joyful-sounding;
Hear, highest of Gods, and stay

Death on his hunter's way,
Full on his forceless prey his beagles hounding ;
Break thou his bow, make short his hand,
Maim his fleet foot whose passage kills the living land.
Let a third wave smite not us, father,
Long since sore smitten of twain,
Lest the house of thy son's son perish
And his name be barren on earth.
Whose race wilt thou comfort rather
If none to thy son remain ?
Whose seed wilt thou choose to cherish
If his be cut off in the birth ?
For the first fair graft of his graffing
Was rent from its maiden root
By the strong swift hand of a lover
Who fills the night with his breath ;
On the lip of the stream low-laughing
Her green soft virginal shoot
Was plucked from the stream-side cover
By the grasp of a love like death.
For a God's was the mouth that kissed her
Who speaks, and the leaves lie dead,
When winter awakes as at warning
To the sound of his foot from Thrace.
Nor happier the bed of her sister
Though Love's self laid her abed
By a bridegroom beloved of the morning
And fair as the dawn's own face.
For Procris, ensnared and ensnaring
By the fraud of a twofold wile,
With the point of her own spear stricken
By the gift of her own hand fell.
Oversubtle in doubts, overdaring
In deeds and devices of guile,
And strong to quench as to quicken,
O Love, have we named thee well ?
By thee was the spear's edge whetted
That laid her dead in the dew,
In the moist green glens of the midland
By her dear lord slain and thee.
And him at the cliff's end fretted
By the grey keen waves, him too,
Thine hand from the white-browed headland
Flung down for a spoil to the sea.
But enough now of griefs grey-growing
Have darkened the house divine,
Have flowered on its boughs and faded,
And green is the brave stock yet.
O father all-seeing and all-knowing,
Let the last fruit fall not of thine
From the tree with whose boughs we are shaded,
From the stock that thy son's hand set.

ERECHTHEUS.

O daughter of Cephisus, from all time
Wise have I found thee, wife and queen, of heart
Perfect ; nor in the days that knew not wind
Nor days when storm blew death upon our peace
Was thine heart swoln with seed of pride, or bowed
With blasts of bitter fear that break men's souls
Who lift too high their minds toward heaven, in thought
Too godlike grown for worship ; but of mood
Equal, in good time reverent of time bad,
And glad in ill days of the good that were.
Nor now too would I fear thee, now misdoubt
Lest fate should find thee lesser than thy doom,
Chosen if thou be to bear and to be great
Haply beyond all women ; and the word
Speaks thee divine, dear queen, that speaks thee dead,
Dead being alive, or quick and dead in one
Shall not men call thee living ? yet I fear
To slay thee timeless with my proper tongue,
With lips, thou knowest, that love thee ; and such work
Was never laid of Gods on men, such word
No mouth of man learnt ever, as from mine
Most loth to speak thine ear most loth shall take
And hold it hateful as the grave to hear.

PRAXITHEA.

That word there is not in all speech of man,
King, that being spoken of the Gods and thee
I have not heart to honor, or dare hold
More than I hold thee or the Gods in hate
Hearing ; but if my heart abhor it heard
Being insubmissive, hold me not thy wife
But use me like a stranger, whom thine hand
Hath fed by chance and finding thence no thanks
Flung off for shame's sake to forgetfulness.

ERECHTHEUS.

O, of what breath shall such a word be made,
Or from what heart find utterance ? Would my tongue
Were rent forth rather from the quivering root
Than made as fire or poison thus for thee.

PRAXITHEA.

But if thou speak of blood, and I that hear
Be chosen of all for this land's love to die
And save to thee thy city, know this well,
Happiest I hold me of her seed alive.

ERECHTHEUS.

O sun that seest, what saying was this of thine,
God, that thy power has breathed into my lips?
For from no sunlit shrine darkling it came.

PRAXITHEA.

What portent from the mid oracular place
Hath smitten thee so like a curse that flies
Wingless, to waste men with its plagues? yet speak.

ERECHTHEUS.

Thy blood the Gods require not; take this first.

PRAXITHEA.

To me than thee more grievous this should sound.

ERECHTHEUS.

That word rang truer and bitterer than it knew.

PRAXITHEA.

This is not then thy grief, to see me die?

ERECHTHEUS.

Die shalt thou not, yet give thy blood to death.

PRAXITHEA.

If this ring worse I know not; strange it rang.

ERECHTHEUS.

Alas, thou knowest not; woe is me that know.

PRAXITHEA.

And woe shall mine be, knowing; yet halt not here.

ERECHTHEUS.

Guiltless of blood this state may stand no more.

PRAXITHEA.

Firm let it stand whatever bleed or fall.

ERECHTHEUS.

O Gods, that I should say it shall and weep

PRAXITHEA.

Weep, and say this? no tears should bathe such words.

ERECHTHEUS.

Woe's me that I must weep upon them, woe

PRAXITHEA.

What stain is on them for thy tears to cleanse?

ERECHTHEUS.

A stain of blood unpurgeable with tears.

PRAXITHEA.

Whence? for thou sayest it is and is not mine.

ERECHTHEUS.

Hear then and know why only of all men I
That bring such news as mine is, I alone
Must wash good words with weeping; I and thou,
Woman, must wail to hear men sing, must groan
To see their joy who love us; all our friends
Save only we, and all save we that love
This holiness of Athens, in our sight
Shall lift their hearts up, in our hearing praise
Gods whom we may not; for to these they give
Life of their children, flower of all their seed,
For all their travail fruit, for all their hopes
Harvest; but we for all our good things, we
Have at their hands which fill all these folk full
Death, barrenness, child-slaughter, curses, cares,
Sea-leaguer and land-shipwreck; which of these,
Which wilt thou first give thanks for? all are thine.

PRAXITHEA.

What first they give who give this city good,
For that first given to save it I give thanks
First, and thanks heartier from a happier tongue,
More than for any my peculier grace
Show me and not my country ; next for this,
That none of all these but for all these I
Must bear my burden, and no eye but mine
Weep of all women's in this broad land born
Who see their land's deliverance ; but much more,
But most for this I thank them most of all,
That this their edge of doom is chosen to pierce
My heart and not my country's ; for the sword
Drawn to smite there and sharpened for such stroke
Should wound more deep than any turned on me.

CHORUS.

Well fares the land that bears such fruit, and well
The spirit that breeds such thought and speech in man.

ERECHTHEUS.

O woman, thou hast shamed my heart with thine,
To show so strong a patience ; take then all ;
For all shall break not nor bring down thy soul.
The word that journeying to the bright God's shrine
Who speaks askance and darkling, but his name
Hath in it slaying and ruin broad writ out,
I heard, hear thou : thus saith he ; There shall die
One soul for all this people ; from thy womb
Came forth the seed that here on dry bare ground
Death's hand must sow untimely, to bring forth
Nor blade nor shoot in season, being by name
To the under Gods made holy, who require
For this land's life her death and maiden blood
To save a maiden city. Thus I heard,
And thus with all said leave thee ; for save this
No word is left us, and no hope alive.

CHORUS.

He hath uttered too surely his wrath not obscurely, nor wrapt as in mists of his breath,
The master that lightens not hearts he enlightens, but gives them foreknowledge of death.
As a bolt from the cloud hath he sent it aloud and proclaimed it afar,
From the darkness and height of the horror of night hath he shown us a star.
Star may I name it and err not, or flame shall I say,
Born of the womb that was born for the tomb of the day?
O Night, whom other but thee for mother, and Death for the father, Night,
Shall we dream to discover, save thee and thy lover, to bring such a sorrow to sight ?
From the slumberless bed for thy bedfellow spread and his bride under earth
Hast thou brought forth a wild and insatiable child, an unbearable birth.
Fierce are the fangs of his wrath, and the pangs that they give ;
None is there, none that may bear them, not one that would live.

CHTHONIA.

Forth of the fine-spun folds of veils that hide
My virgin chamber toward the full-faced sun
I set my foot not moved of mine own will,
Unmaidenlike, nor with unprompted speed
Turn eyes too broad or doglike unabashed
On reverend heads of men and thence on thine,
Mother, now covered from the light and bowed
As hers who mourns her brethren ; but what grief
Bends thy blind head thus earthward, holds thus mute,
I know not till thy will be to lift up
Toward mine thy sorrow-muffled eyes and speak ;
And till thy will be would I know this not.

PRAXITHEA.

Old men and childless, or if sons ye have seen
And daughters, elder-born were these than mine.
Look on this child, how young of years, how sweet,
How scant of time and green of age her life
Puts forth its flower of girlhood ; and her gait
How virginal, how soft her speech, her eyes
How seemly smiling ; wise should all ye be,

All honorable and kindly men of age ;
Now give me counsel and one word to say
That I may bear to speak, and hold my peace
Henceforth for all time even as all ye now.
Dumb are ye all, bowed eyes and tongueless mouths.
Unprofitable ; if this were wind that speaks,
As much its breath might move you. Thou then, child,
Set thy sweet eyes on mine ; look through them well ;
Take note of all the writing of my face
As of a tablet or a tomb inscribed
That bears me record ; lifeless now, my life
Thereon that was think written ; brief to read,
Yet shall the scripture sear thine eyes as fire
And leave them dark as dead men's. Nay, dear child,
Thou hast no skill, my maiden, and no sense
To take such knowledge ; sweet is all thy lore,
And all this bitter ; yet I charge thee learn
And love and lay this up within thine heart,
Even this my word ; less ill it were to die
Than live and look upon thy mother dead,
Thy mother-land that bare thee ; no man slain
But him who hath seen it shall men count unblest,
None blest as him who hath died and seen it not.

CHTHONIA.

That sight some God keep from me though I die.

PRAXITHEA.

A God from thee shall keep it ; fear not this.

CHTHONIA.

Thanks all my life long shall he gain of mine.

PRAXITHEA.

Short gain of all yet shall he get of thee.

CHTHONIA.

Brief be my life, yet so long live my thanks.

PRAXITHEA.

So long ? so little ; how long shall they live ?

CHTHONIA.

Even while I see the sunlight and thine eyes.

PRAXITHEA.

Would mine might shut ere thine upon the sun

CHTHONIA.

For me thou prayest unkindly ; change that prayer.

PRAXITHEA.

Not well for me thou sayest, and ill for thee.

CHTHONIA.

Nay, for me well, if thou shalt live, not I.

PRAXITHEA,

How live, and lose these loving looks of thine ?

CHTHONIA.

It seems I too, thus praying, then, love thee not.

PRAXITHEA.

Lov'st thou not life ? what wouldst thou do to die ?

CHTHONIA.

Well, but not more than all things, love I life.

PRAXITHEA.

And fain wouldst keep it as thine age allows ?

CHTHONIA.

Fain would I live, and fain not fear to die.

PRAXITHEA

That I might bid thee die not ! Peace ; no more.

CHORUS.

A Godlike race of grief the Gods have set
For these to run matched equal, heart with heart.

PRAXITHEA.

Child of the chief of Gods, and maiden crowned,
Queen of these towers and fostress of their king,
Pallas, and thou my father's holiest head,
A living well of life nor stanched nor stained,
O God Cephisus, thee too charge I next,
Be to me judge and witness; nor thine ear
Shall now my tongue invoke not, thou to me
Most hateful of things holy, mournfullest
Of all old sacred streams that wash the world,
Ilissus, on whose marge at flowery play
A whirlwind-footed bridegroom found my child
And rapt her northward where mine elder-born
Keeps now the Thracian bride-bed of a God
Intolerable to seamen, but this land
Finds him in hope for her sake favorable,
A gracious son by wedlock; hear me then
Thou likewise, if with no faint heart or false
The word I say be said, the gift be given,
Which might I choose I had rather die than give
Or speak and die not. Ere thy limbs were made
Or thine eyes lightened strife, thou knowest, my child,
'Twixt God and God had risen, which heavenlier name
Should here stand hallowed, whose more liberal grace
Should win this city's worship, and our land
To which of these do reverence; first the lord
Whose wheels make lightnings of the foam-flowered sea
Here on this rock, whose height brow-bound with dawn
Is head and heart of Athens, one sheer blow
Struck, and beneath the triple wound that shook
The stony sinews and stark roots of the earth
Sprang toward the sun a sharp salt fount, and sank
Where lying it lights the heart up of the hill,
A well of bright strange brine; but she that reared
Thy father with her same chaste fostering hand
Set for a sign against it in our guard
The holy bloom of the olive, whose hoar leaf
High in the shadowy shrine of Pandrosus
Hath honor of us all; and of this strife
The twelve most high Gods judging with one mouth
Acclaimed her victress; wroth whereat, as wronged
That she should hold from him such prize and place,
The strong king of the tempest-rifted sea
Loosed reinless on the low Thriasian plain
The thunders of his chariots, swallowing stunned
Earth, beasts, and men, the whole blind foundering world
That was the sun's at morning, and ere noon
Death's; nor this only prey fulfilled his mind
For with strange crook-toothed prows of Carian folk
Who snatch a sanguine life out of the sea,
Thieves keen to pluck their bloody fruit of spoil
From the grey fruitless waters, has their God
Furrowed our shores to waste them, as the fields
Were landward harried from the north with swords
Aonian, sickles of man-slaughtering edge
Ground for no hopeful harvest of live grain
Against us in Bœotia; these being spent,
Now this third time his wind of wrath has blown
Right on this people a mightier wave of war,
Three times more huge a ruin; such its ridge
Foam-rimmed and hollow like the womb of heaven,
But black for shining, and with death for life
Big now to birth and ripe with child, full-blown
With fear and fruit of havoc, takes the sun
Out of our eyes, darkening the day, and blinds
The fair sky's face unseasonably with change,
A cloud in one and billow of battle, a surge
High reared as heaven with monstrous surf of spears
That shake on us their shadow, till men's heads
Bend, and their hearts even with its forward wind
Wither, so blasts all seed in them of hope
Its breath and blight of presage; yea, even now
The winter of this wind out of the deeps
Makes cold our trust in comfort of the Gods
And blind our eye toward outlook; yet not here,
Here never shall the Thracian plant on high
For ours his father's symbol, nor with wreaths
A strange folk wreathe it upright set and crowned
Here where our natural people born behold
The golden Gorgon of the shield's defence

That screeens their flowering olive, nor strange Gods
Be graced, and Pallas here have praise no more.
And if this be not I must give my child,
Thee, mine own very blood and spirit of mine,
Thee to be slain. Turn from me, turn thine eyes
A little from me ; I can bear not yet
To see if still they smile on mine or no,
If fear make faint the light in them, or faith
Fix them as stars of safety. Need have we,
Sore need of stars that set not in mid storm,
Lights that outlast the lightnings ; yet my heart
Endures not to make proof of thine or these,
Not yet to know thee whom I made, and bare
What manner of woman ; had I borne thee man,
I had made no question of thine eyes or heart,
Nor spared to read the scriptures in them writ,
Wert thou my son ; yet couldst thou then but die
Fallen in sheer fight by chance and charge of spears
And have no more of memory, fill no tomb
More famous than thy fellows in fair field,
Where many share the grave, many the praise ;
But one crown shall one only girl my child
Wear, dead for this dear city, and give back life
To him that gave her and to me that bare,
And save two sisters living ; and all this,
Is this not all good? I shall give thee, child,
Thee but by fleshly nature mine, to bleed
For dear land's love ; but if the city fall
What part is left me in my children then?
But if it stand and thou for it lie dead,
Then hast thou in it a better part than we,
A holier portion than we all ; for each
Hath but the length of his own life to live,
And this most glorious mother-land on earth
To worship till that life have end ; but thine
Hath end no more than hers ; thou, dead, shalt live
Till Athens live not ; for the days and nights
Given of thy bare brief dark dividual life,
Shall she give thee half all her agelong own
And all its glory ; for thou givest her these ;
But with one hand she takes and gives again
More than I gave or she requires of thee.
Come therefore, I will make thee fit for death,
I that could give thee, dear, no gift at birth
Save of light life that breathes and bleeds, even I
Will help thee to this better gift than mine
And lead thee by this little living hand
That death shall make so strong, to that great end
Whence it shall lighten like a God's, and strike
Dead the strong heart of battle that would break
Athens ; but ye, pray for this land, old men,
That it may bring forth never child on earth
To love it less, for none may more, than we.

CHORUS.

Out of the north wind grief came forth,
And the shining of a sword out of the sea
Yea, of old the first-blown blast blew the prelude of this last,
The blast of his trumpet upon Rhodope.
Out of the north skies full of his cloud,
With the clamour of his storms as of a crowd
At the wheels of a great king crying aloud,
At the axle of a strong king's car
That has girded on the girdle of war—
With hands that lightened the skies in sunder
And feet whose fall was followed of thunder,
A God, a great God strange of name,
With horse-yoke fleeter-hoofed than flame,
To the mountain bed of a maiden came,
Oreithyia, the bride mismated,
Wofully wed in a snow-strewn bed
With a bridegroom that kisses the bride's mouth dead ;
Without garland, without glory, without song,
As a fawn by night on the hills belated,
Given over for a spoil unto the strong.
From lips how pale so keen a wail
At the grasp of a God's hand on her she gave,
When his breath that darkens air made a havoc of her hair,
It rang from the mountain even to the wave ;
Rang with a cry, *Woe's me, woe is me!*
From the darkness upon Hæmus to the sea
And with hands that clung to her new lord's knee,
As a virgin overborne with shame,
She besought him by her spouseless fame,
By the blameless breasts of a maid unmarried
And locks unmaidenly rent and harried,
And all her flower of body, born
To match the maidenhood of morn,
With the might of the wind's wrath wrenched and torn.

Vain, all vain as a dead man's vision
Falling by night in his old friends' sight,
To be scattered with slumber and slain ere light;
Such a breath of such a bridegroom in that hour
Of her prayers made mock, of her fears derision,
And a ravage of her youth as of a flower.
With a leap of his limbs as a lion's, a cry from his lips as of thunder,
In a storm of amorous godhead filled with fire,
From the height of the heaven that was rent with the roar of his coming in sunder,
Sprang the strong God on the spoil of his desire.
And the pines of the hills were as green reeds shattered,
And their branches as buds of the soft spring scattered,
And the west wind and east, and the sound of the south,
Fell dumb at the blast of the north wind's mouth,
At the cry of his coming out of heaven.
And the wild beasts quailed in the rifts and hollows
Where hound nor clarion of huntsman follows,
And the depths of the sea were aghast, and whitened,
And the crowns of their waves were as flame that lightened,
And the heart of the floods thereof was riven.
But she knew not him coming for terror, she felt not her wrong that he wrought her,
When her locks as leaves were shed before his breath,
And she heard not for terror his prayer, though the cry was a God's that besought her,
Blown from lips that strew the world-wide seas with death.
For the heart was molten within her to hear,
And her knees beneath her were loosened for fear,
And her blood fast bound as a frost-bound water,
And the soft new bloom of the green earth's daughter
Wind-wasted as blossom of a tree;
As the wild God rapt her from earth's breast lifted,
On the strength of the stream of his dark breath drifted,
From the bosom of earth as a bride from the mother,
With storm for bridesman and wreck for brother,
As a cloud that he sheds upon the sea.
Of this hoary-headed woe
Song made memory long ago;
Now a younger grief to mourn
Needs a new song younger born.
Who shall teach our tongues to reach
What strange height of saddest speech,
For the new bride's sake that is given to be
A stay to fetter the foot of the sea,
Lest it quite spurn down and trample the town,
Ere the violets be dead that were plucked for its crown,
Or its olive-leaf whiten and wither?
Who shall say of the wind's way
That he journed yesterday,
Or the track of the storm that shall sound to-morrow,
If the new be more than the grey-grown sorrow?
For the wind of the green first season was keen,
And the blast shall be sharper that blew between
That the breath of the sea blows hither.

HERALD OF EUMOLPUS.

Old men, grey borderers on the march of death,
Tongue-fighters, tough of talk and sinewy speech,
Else nerveless, from no crew of such faint folk
Whose tongues are stouter than their hands come I
To bid not you to battle; let them strike
Whose swords are sharper than your keen-tongued wail,
And ye, sit fast and sorrow; but what man
Of all this land-folk and earth laboring herd
For heart or hand seems foremost, him I call
If heart be his to hearken, him bid forth
To try if one be in the sun's sight born
Of all that grope and grovel on dry ground
That may join hands in battle-grip for death
With them whose seed and strength is of the sea.

CHORUS.

Know thou this much for all thy loud blast blown,

We lack not hands to speak with, swords to plead,
For proof of peril, not of boisterous breath,
Sea-wind and storm of barren mouths that foam
And rough rock's edge of menace ; and short space
May lessen thy large ignorance and inform
This insolence with knowledge if there live
Man earth-begotton of no tenderer thews
Than knit the great joints of the grim sea's brood
With hasps of steel together ; heaven to help,
One man shall break, even on their own flood's verge,
That iron bulk of battle ; but thine eye
That sees it now swell higher than sand or shore
Haply shall see not when thine host shall shrink.

HERALD OF EUMOLPUS.

Not haply, nay, but surely, shall not thine.

CHORUS.

That lot shall no God give who fights for thee.

HERALD OF EUMOLPUS.

Shall Gods bear bit and bridle, fool, of men?

CHORUS.

Nor them forbid we nor shalt thou constrain.

HERALD OF EUMOLPUS.

Yet say'st thou none shall make the good lot mine?

CHORUS.

Of thy side none, nor moved for fear of thee.

HERALD OF EUMOLPUS.

Gods hast thou then to baffle Gods of ours?

CHORUS.

Nor thine nor mine, but equal-souled are they.

HERALD OF EUMOLPUS.

Toward good and ill, then, equal-eyed of soul?

CHORUS.

Nay, but swift-eyed to note where ill thoughts breed.

HERALD OF EUMOLPUS.

Thy shaft word-feathered flies yet far of me.

CHORUS.

Pride knows not, wounded, till the heart be cleft.

HERALD OF EUMOLPUS.

No shaft wounds deep whose wing is plumed with words.

CHORUS.

Lay that to heart, and bid thy tongue learn grace.

HERALD OF EUMOLPUS.

Grace shall thine own crave soon too late of mine.

CHORUS

Boast thou till then, but I wage words no more.

ERECHTHEUS.

Man, what shrill wind of speech and wrangling air
Blows in our ears a summons from thy lips
Winged with what message, or what gift or grace
Requiring? none but what his hand may take
Here may the foe think hence to reap, nor this
Except some doom from Godward yield it him.

HERALD OF EUMOLPUS.

King of this land-folk, by my mouth to thee
Thus saith the son of him that shakes thine earth
Eumolpus ; now the stakes of war are set,
For land or sea to win by throw and wear ;
Choose therefore or to quit thy side and give
The palm unfought for to his bloodless hand,

Or by that father's sceptre, and the foot
Whose tramp far off makes tremble for pure fear
Thy soul-struck mother, piercing like a sword
The immortal womb that bare thee ; by the waves
That no man bridles and that bound thy world,
And by the winds and storms of all the sea,
He swears to raze from eyeshot of the sun
This city named not of his father's name,
And wash to deathward down one flood of doom
This whole fresh brood of earth yearned naturally,
Green yet and faint in its first blade, unblown
With yellow hope of harvest ; so do thou,
Seeing whom thy time is come to meet, for fear
Yield, or gird up thy force to fight and die.

ERECHTHEUS.

To fight then be it ; for if to die or live,
No man but only a God knows this much yet
Seeing us fare forth, who bear but in our hands
The weapons not the fortunes of our fight ;
For these now rest as lots that yet undrawn
Lie in the lap of the unknown hour ; but this
I know, not thou, whose hollow mouth of storm
Is but a warlike wind, a sharp salt breath
That bites and wounds not ; death nor life of mine
Shall give to death or lordship of strange kings
The soul of this live city, nor their heel
Bruise her dear brow discrowned, nor snaffle or goad
Wound her free mouth or stain her sanguine side
Yet masterless of man ; so bid thy lord
Learn ere he weep to learn it, and too late
Gnash teeth that could not fasten on her flesh,
And foam his life out in dark froth of blood
Vain as a wind's waif of the loud-mouthed sea
Torn from the wave's edge whitening. Tell him this ;
Though thrice his might were mustered for our scathe
And thicker set with fence of thorn-edged spears
Than sands are whirled about the wintering beach
When storms have swoln the rivers, and their blasts
Have breached the broad sea-banks with stress of sea,
That waves of inland and the main make war
As men that mix and grapple ; though his ranks
Were more to number than all wild-wood leaves
The wind waves on the hills of all the world,
Yet should the heart not faint, the head not fail,
The breath not fail of Athens. Say, the Gods
From lips that have no more on earth to say
Have told thee this the last good news or ill
That I shall speak in sight of earth and sun
Or he shall hear and see them : for the next
That ear of his from tongue of mine may take
Must be the first word spoken underground
From dead to dead in darkness. Hence ; make haste,
Lest war's fleet foot be swifter than thy tongue
And I that part not to return again
On him that comes not to depart away
Be fallen before thee ; for the time is full,
And with such mortal hope as knows not fear
I go this high last way to the end of all.

CHORUS.

Who shall put a bridle in the mourner's lips to chasten them,
Or seal up the fountains of his tears for shame ?
Song nor prayer nor prophecy shall slacken tears nor hasten them,
Till grief be within him as a burnt-out flame ;
Till the passion be broken in his breast
And the might thereof molten into rest,
And the rain of eyes that weep be dry,
And the breath be stilled of lips that sigh.
Death at last for all men is a harbor ; yet they flee from it,
Set sails to the storm-wind and again to sea ;
Yet for all their labor no whit further shall they be from it,
Nor longer but wearier shall their life's work be.
And with anguish of travail until night
Shall they steer into shipwreck out of sight,
And with oars that break and shrouds that strain
Shall they drive whence no ship steers again.
Bitter and strange is the word of the God most high,
And steep the strait of his way.
Through a pass rock-rimmed and narrow the light that gleams

On the faces of men falls faint as the dawn of dreams,
The dayspring of death as a star in an under sky
Where night is the dead men's day.
As darkness and storm is his will that on earth is done,
As a cloud is the face of his strength.
King of kings, holiest of holies, and mightiest of might,
Lord of the lords of thine heaven that are humble in thy sight,
Hast thou set not an end for the path of the fires of the sun,
To appoint him a rest at length?
Hast thou told not by measure the waves of the waste wide sea,
And the ways of the wind their master and thrall to thee?
Hast thou filled not the furrows with fruit for the world's increase?
Has thine ear not heard from of old or thine eye not read
The thought and the deed of us living, the doom of us dead?
Hast thou made not war upon earth, and again made peace?
Therefore, O father, that seest us whose lives are a breath,
Take off us thy burden, and give us not wholly to death.
For lovely is life, and the law wherein all things live,
And gracious the season of each, and the hour of its kind,
And precious the seed of his life in a wise man's mind;
But all save life for his life will a base man give.
But a life that is given for the life of the whole live land,
From a heart unspotted a gift of a spotless hand,
Of pure will perfect and free, for the land's life's sake,
What man shall fear not to put forth his hand and take?
For the fruit of a sweet life plucked in its pure green prime
On his hand who plucks is as blood, on his soul as crime.
With cursing ye buy not blessing, nor peace with strife,
And the hand is hateful that chaffers with death for life.
Hast thou heard, O my heart, and endurest
The word that is said,
What a garland by sentence found surest
Is wrought for what head?
With what blossomless flowerage of sea-foam and blood-colored foliage inwound
It shall crown as a heifer's for slaughter the forehead for marriage uncrowned?
How the veils and the wreaths that should cover
The brows of the bride
Shall be shed by the breath of what lover
And scattered aside?
With a blast of the mouth of what bridegroom the crowns shall be cast from her hair.
And her head by what altar made humble be left of them naked and bare?
At a shrine unbeloved of a God unbeholden a gift shall be given for the land,
That its ramparts though shaken with clamor and horror of manifold waters may stand:
That the crests of its citadels crowned and its turrets that thrust up their heads to the sun
May behold him unblinded with darkness of waves overmastering their bulwarks begun.
As a bride shall they bring her, a prey for the bridegroom, a flower for the couch of her lord;
They shall muffle her mouth that she cry not or curse them, and cover her eyes from the sword.
They shall fasten her lips as with bit and with bridle, and darken the light of her face,
That the soul of the slayer may not falter, his heart be not molten, his hand give not grace.
If she weep then, yet may none that hear take pity;
If she cry not, none should hearken though she cried.
Shall a virgin shield thine head for love, O city,
With a virgin's blood anointed as for pride?
Yet we held thee dear and hallowed of her favor,
Dear of all men held thy people to her heart;
Nought she loves the breath of blood, the sanguine savour,
Who hath built with us her throne and chosen her part.
Bloodless are her works, and sweet
All the ways that feel her feet;
From the empire of her eyes
Light takes life and darkness flies;
From the harvest of her hands

Wealth strikes root in prosperous lands ;
Wisdom of her word is made ;
At her strength is strength afraid ;
From the beam of her bright spear
War's fleet foot goes back for fear ;
In her shrine she reared the birth
Fire-begotten on live earth ;
Glory from her helm was shed
On his olive-shadowed head ;
By no hand but his shall she
Scourge the storms back of the sea,
To no fame but his shall give
Grace, being dead, with hers to live,
And in double name divine
Half the godhead of their shrine.
But now with what word, with what woe may we meet
The timeless passage of piteous feet,
Hither that bend to the last way's end
They shall walk upon earth ?
What song be rolled for a bride black-stoled
And the mother whose hand of her hand hath hold ?
For anguish of heart is my soul's strength broken
And the tongue sealed fast that would fain have spoken,
To behold thee, O child of so bitter a birth
That we counted so sweet,
What way thy steps to what bride-feast tend,
What gift he must give that shall wed thee for token
If the bridegroom be goodly to greet.

CHTHONIA.

People, old men of my city, lordly wise and hoar of head,
I a spouseless bride and crownless but with garlands of the dead
From the fruitful light turn silent to my dark unchilded bed.

CHORUS.

Wise of word was he too surely, but with deadlier wisdom wise,
First who gave thee name from under earth, no breath from upper skies,
When foredoomed to this day's darkness, their first daylight filled thine eyes.

PRAXITHEA.

Child, my child that wast and art but death's and now no more of mine,
Half my heart is cloven with anguish by the sword made sharp for thine,
Half exalts its wing for triumph, that I bare thee thus divine.

CHTHONIA.

Though for me the sword's edge thirst that sets no point against thy breast,
Mother, O my mother, where I drank of life and fell on rest,
Thine, not mine, is all the grief that marks this hour accurst and blest.

CHORUS.

Sweet thy sleep and sweet the bosom was that gave thee sleep and birth ;
Harder now the breast, and girded with no marriage-band for girth,
Where thine head shall sleep, the namechild of the lords of under earth.

PRAXITHEA.

Dark the name and dark the gifts they gave thee, child, in childbirth were,
Sprung from him that rent the womb of earth, a bitter seed to bear,
Born with groanings of the ground that gave him way toward heaven's dear air.

CHTHONIA.

Day to day makes answer, first to last, and life to death ; but I,
Born for death's sake, die for life's sake, if indeed this be to die,
This my doom that seals me deathless till the springs of time run dry.

CHORUS.

Children shalt thou bear to memory, that to man shalt bring forth none ;
Yea, the lordliest that lift eyes and hearts and songs to meet the sun,
Names to fire men's ears like music till the round world's race be run.

PRAXITHEA.

I thy mother, named of Gods that wreak revenge and brand with blame,

Now for thy love shall be loved as thou, and famous with thy fame,
While this city's name on earth shall be for earth her mightiest name.

CHTHONIA.

That I may give this poor girl's blood of mine
Scarce yet sun-warmed with summer, this thin life
Still green with flowerless growth of seedling days,
To build again my city; that no drop
Fallen of these innocent veins on the cold ground
But shall help to knit the joints of her firm walls
To knead the stones together, and make sure
The band about her maiden girdlestead
Once fastened, and of all men's violent hands
Inviolable for ever; these to me
Were no such gifts as crave no thanksgiving,
If with one blow dividing the sheer life
I might make end, and one pang wind up all
And seal mine eyes from sorrow; for such end
The Gods give none they love not; but my heart,
That leaps up lightened of all sloth or fear
To take the sword's point, yet with one thought's load
Flags, and falls back, broken of wing, that halts
Maimed in mid flight for thy sake and borne down,
Mother, that in the places where I played
An arm's length from thy bosom and no more
Shalt find me never, nor thine eye wax glad
To mix with mine its eyesight and for love
Laugh without word, filled with sweet light, and speak
Divine dumb things of the inward spirit and heart,
Moved silently; nor hand or lip again
Touch hand or lid of either, but for mine
Shall thine meet only shadows of swift night,
Dreams and dead thoughts of dead things; and the bed
Thou strewedst, a sterile place for all time, strewn
For my sleep only, with its void sad sheets
Shall vex thee, and the unfruitful coverlid
For empty days reproach me dead, that leave
No profit of my body, but am gone
As one not worth being born to bear no seed,
A sapless stock and branchless: yet thy womb
Shall want not honor of me, that brought forth
For all this people freedom, and for earth
From the unborn city born out of my blood
To light the face of all men evermore
Glory; but lay thou this to thy great heart
Whereunder in the dark of birth conceived
Mine unlit life lay girdled with the zone
That bound thy bridal bosom; set this thought
Against all edge of evil as a sword
To beat back sorrow, that for all the world
Thou brought'st me forth a saviour, who shall save
Athens; for none but I from none but thee
Shall take this death for garland; and the men
Mine unknown children of unsounded years,
My sons unrisen shall rise up at thine hand,
Sown of thy seed to bring forth seed to thee,
And call thee most of all most fruitful found
Blessed; but me too for my barren womb
More than my sisters for their children born
Shall these give honor, yea in scorn's own place
Shall men set love and bring for mockery praise
And thanks for curses; for the dry wild vine
Scoffed at and cursed of all men that was I
Shall shed them wine to make the world's heart warm,
That all eyes seeing may lighten, and all ears
Hear and be kindled; such a draught to drink
Shall be the blood that bids this dust bring forth,
The chaliced life here spilt on this mine earth.
Mine, my great father's mother; whom I pray
Take me now gently, tenderly take home,
And softly lay in his my cold chaste hand
Who is called of men by my name, being of Gods
Charged only and chosen to bring men under earth,
And now must lead and stay me with his staff
A silent soul led of a silent God,
Toward sightless things led sightless; and on earth
I see now but the shadow of mine end,
And this last light of all for me in heaven.

PRAXITHEA.

Farewell I bid thee; so bid thou not me,
Lest the Gods hear and mock us; yet on these
I lay the weight not of this grief, nor cast
Ill words for ill deeds back; for if one say
They have done men wrong, what hurt have they to hear,
Or he what help to have said it? surely, child,
If one among men born might say it and live

Blameless, none more than I may, who being vexed
Hold yet my peace; for now through tears enough
Mine eyes have seen the sun that from this day
Thine shall see never more; and in the night
Enough has blown of evil, and mine ears
With wail enough the winds have filled, and brought
Too much of cloud from over the sharp sea
To mar for me the morning; such a blast
Rent from these wide void arms and helpless breast
Long since one graft of me disbranched, and bore
Beyond the wild ways of the unwandered world
And loud wastes of the thunder-throated sea,
Springs of the night and openings of the heaven,
The old garden of the Sun; whence never more
From west or east shall winds bring back that blow
From folds of opening heaven or founts of night
The flower of mine once ravished, born my child
To bear strange children; nor on wings of theirs
Shall comfort come back to me, nor their sire
Breathe help upon my peril, nor his strength
Raise up my weakness; but of Gods and men
I drift unsteered on ruin, and the wave
Darkens my head with imminent height, and hangs
Dumb, filled too full with thunder that shall leave
These ears death-deafened when the tide finds tongue
And all its wrath bears on them; thee, O child,
I help not, nor am holpen; fain, ah fain,
More than was ever mother born of man,
Were I to help thee: fain beyond all prayer,
Beyond all thought fain to redeem thee, torn
More timeless from me sorrowing than the dream
That was thy sister; so shalt thou be too,
Thou but a vision, shadow-shaped of sleep,
By grief made out of nothing; now but once
I touch, but once more hold thee, one more kiss
This last time and none other ever more
Leave on thy lips and leave them. Go; thou wast
My heart, my heart's blood, life-blood of my life,
My child, my nursling; now this breast once thine
Shall rear again no children; never now
Shall any mortal blossom born like thee
Lie there, nor ever with small silent mouth
Draw the sweet springs dry for an hour that feed
The blind blithe life that knows not; never head
Rest here to make these cold veins warm, nor eye
Laugh itself open with the lips that reach
Lovingly toward a fount more loving; these
Death makes as all good lesser things now dead,
And all the latter hopes that flowered from these
And fall as these fell fruitless; no joy more
Shall man take of thy maidenhood, no tongue
Praise it; no good shall eyes get more of thee
That lightened for thy love's sake. Now, take note,
Give ear, O all ye people, that my word
May pierce your hearts through, and the stroke that cleaves
Be fruitful to them; so shall all that hear
Grow great at heart with child of thought most high
And bring forth seed in season; this my child,
This flower of this my body, this sweet life,
This fair live youth I give you, to be slain,
Spent, shed, poured out, and perish; take my gift
And give it death and the under Gods who crave
So much for that they give; for this is more,
Much more is this than all we; for they give
Freedom, and for a blast, an air of breath,
A little soul that is not, they give back
Light for all eyes, cheer for all hearts, and life
That fills the world's width full of fame and praise
And mightier love than children's. This they give,
The grace to make thy country great, and wrest
From time and death power to take hold on her
And strength to scathe for ever; and this gift,
Is this no more than man's love is or mine,
Mine and all mothers? nay, where that seems more,
Where one loves life of child, wife, father, friend,

Son, husband, mother, more than this, even there
Are all these lives worth nothing, all loves else
With this love slain and buried, and their tomb
A thing for shame to spit on ; for what love
Hath a slave left to love with ? or the heart
Base-born and bound in bondage fast to fear,
What should it do to love thee ? what hath he,
The man that hath no country ? Gods nor men
Have such to friend, yoked beast-like to base life,
Vile, fruitless, grovelling at the foot of death,
Landless and kinless thralls of no man's blood,
Unchilded and unmothered, abject limbs
That breed things abject ; but who loves on earth
Not friend, wife, husband, father, mother, child,
Nor loves his own life for his own land's sake,
But only this thing most, more this than all,
He loves all well and well of all is loved,
And this love lives for ever. See now, friends,
My countrymen, my brothers, with what heart
I give you this that of your hands again
The Gods require for Athens ; as I give
So give ye to them what their hearts would have
Who shall give back things better; yea, and these
I take for me to witness, all these Gods,
Were their great will more grievous than it is,
Not one but three, for this one thin-spun thread
A threefold band of children would I give
For this land's love's sake ; for whose love to-day
I bid thee, child, fare deathward and farewell.

CHORUS.

O wofullest of women, yet of all
Happiest, thy word be hallowed ; in all time
Thy name shall blossom, and from strange new tongues
High things be spoken of thee ; for such grace
The Gods have dealt to no man, that on none
Have laid so heavy sorrow. From this day
Live thou assured of godhead in thy blood,
And in thy fate no lowlier than a God
In all good things and evil ; such a name
Shall be thy child this city's and thine own
Next hers that called it Athens. Go now forth
Blest, and grace with thee to the doors of death.

CHTHONIA.

O city, O glory of Athens, O crown of my father's land, farewell

CHORUS.

For welfare is given her of thee.

CHTHONIA.

O Goddess, be good to thy people, that in them dominion and freedom may dwell

CHORUS.

Turn from us the strengths of the sea.

CHTHONIA.

Let glory's and theirs be one name in the mouths of all nations made glad with the sun.

CHORUS.

For the cloud is blown back with thy breath.

CHTHONIA.

With the long last love of mine eyes I salute thee, O land where my days now are done.

CHORUS.

But her life shall be born of thy death.

CHTHONIA.

I put on me the darkness thy shadow, my mother, and symbol, O Earth, of my name.

CHORUS.

For thine was her witness from birth.

CHTHONIA.

In thy likeness I come to thee darkling, a daughter whose dawn and her even are the same.

CHORUS.

Be thine heart to her gracious, O Earth.

CHTHONIA.

To thine own kind be kindly, for thy son's name's sake

CHORUS.

That sons unborn may praise thee and thy first-born son.

CHTHONIA.

Give me thy sleep, who give thee all my life awake.

CHORUS.

Too swift a sleep, ere half the web of day be spun.

CHTHONIA.

Death brings the shears or ever life wind up the weft.

CHORUS.

Their edge is ground and sharpened; who shall stay his hand?

CHTHONIA.

The woof is thin, a small short life, with no thread left.

CHORUS.

Yet hath it strength, stretched out, to shelter all the land.

CHTHONIA.

Too frail a tent for covering, and a screen too strait.

CHORUS.

Yet broad enough for buckler shall thy sweet life be.

CHTHONIA.

A little bolt to bar off battle from the gate.

CHORUS.

A wide sea-wall, that shatters the besieging sea.

CHTHONIA.

I lift up mine eyes from the skirts of the shadow,
From the border of death to the limits of light;
O streams and rivers of mountain and meadow
That hallow the last of my signt,
O father that wast of my mother
Cephisus, O thou too his brother
From the bloom of whose banks as a prey
Winds harried my sister away,
O crown on the world's head lying
Too high for its waters to drown,
Take yet this one word of me dying,
O city, O crown.
Though land-wind and sea-wind with mouths that blow slaughter
Should gird them to battle against thee again,
New-born of the blood of a maiden thy daughter,
The rage of their breath shall be vain.
For their strength shall be quenched and made idle,
And the foam of their mouths find a bridle,
And the height of their heads bow down
At the foot of the towers of the town.
Be blest and beloved as I love thee
Of all that shall draw from thee breath;
Be thy life as the sun's is above thee;
I go to my death.

CHORUS.

Many loves of many a mood and many a kind
Fill the life of man, and mould the secret mind;
Many days bring many dooms, to loose and bind;
Sweet in each in season, good the gift it brings,
Sweet as change of night and day with alter ing wings,
Night that lulls world-weary day, day that comforts night,
Night that fills our eyes with sleep, day that fills with light.
None of all is lovelier, loftier love is none,
Less is bride's for bridegroom, mother's less for son,
Child, than this that crowns and binds up all in one;

Love of thy sweet light, thy fostering breast and hand,
Mother Earth, and city chosen, and natural land;
Hills that bring the strong streams forth, heights of heavenlier air,
Fields aflower with winds and suns, woods with shadowing hair.
But none of the nations of men shall they liken to thee,
Whose children true-born and the fruit of thy body are we.
The rests are thy sons but in figure, in word are thy seed;
We only the flower of thy travail, thy children indeed.
Of thy soil hast thou fashioned our limbs, of thy waters their blood,
And the life of thy springs everlasting is fount of our flood.
No wind oversea blew us hither adrift on thy shore,
None sowed us by land in thy womb that conceived us and bore.
But the stroke of the shaft of the sunlight that brought us to birth
Pierced only and quickened thy furrows to bear us, O Earth.
With the beams of his love wast thou cloven as with iron or fire,
And the life in thee yearned for his life, and grew great with desire.
And the hunger and thirst to be wounded and healed with his dart
Made fruitful the love in thy veins and the depth of thine heart.
And the showers out of heaven overflowing and liquid with love
Fulfilled thee with child of his godhead as rain from above.
Such desire had ye twain of each other, till molten in one
Ye might bear and beget of your bodies the fruits of the sun.
And the trees in their season brought forth and were kindled anew
By the warmth of the moisture of marriage, the child-bearing dew.
And the firstlings were fair of the wedlock of heaven and of earth;
All countries were bounteous with blossom and burgeon of birth,
Green pastures of grass for all cattle, and life-giving corn;
But here of thy bosom, here only, the man-child was born.
All races but one are as aliens engrafted or sown,
Strange children and changelings; but we, O our mother, thine own.
Thy nurslings are others, and seedlings they know not of whom;
For these hast thou fostered, but us thou hast borne in thy womb.
Who is he of us all, O beloved, that owe thee for birth,
Who would give not his blood for his birth's sake, O mother, O Earth?
What landsman is he that was fostered and reared of thine hand
Who may vaunt him as we may in death though he die for the land?
Well doth she therefore who gives thee in guerdon
The bloom of the life of thy giving;
And thy body was bowed by no fruitless burden,
That bore such fruit of thee living.
For her face was not darkened for fear,
For her eyelids conceived not a tear,
Nor a cry from her lips craved pity;
But her mouth was a fountain of song,
And her heart as a citadel strong
That guards the heart of the city.

MESSENGER.

High things of strong-souled men that loved their land
On brass and stone are written, and their deeds
On high days chanted; but none graven or sung
That ever set men's eyes or spirits on fire,
Athenians, has the sun's height seen, or earth
Heard in her depth reverberate as from heaven,
More worth men's praise and good report of Gods
Than here I bring for record in your ears.
For now being come to the altar, where as priest
Death ministering should meet her, and his hand
Seal her sweet eyes asleep, the maiden stood,
With light in all her face as of a bride
Smiling, or shine of festal flame by night
Far flung from towers of triumph; and her lips
Trembled with pride in pleasure, that no fear
Blanched them nor death before his time drank dry
The blood whose bloom fulfilled them; for her cheeks

Lightened, and brighter than a bridal veil
Her hair enrobed her bosom and enrolled
From face to feet the body's whole soft length
As with a cloud sun-saturate ; then she spake
With maiden tongue words manlike, but her eyes
Lit mildly like a maiden's : *Countrymen,*
With more goodwill and height of happier heart
I give me to you than my mother bare,
And go more gladly this great way to death
Than young men bound to battle. Then with face
Turned to the the shadowiest part of all the shrine
And eyes fast set upon the further shade,
Take me, dear Gods ; and as some form had shone
From the deep hollow shadow, some God's tongue
Answered, *I bless you that your guardian grace*
Gives me to guard this country, takes my blood,
Your child's by name, to heal it. Then the priest
Set to the flower-sweet snow of her soft throat
The sheer knife's edge that severed it, and loosed
From the fair bondage of so spotless flesh
So strong a spirit ; and all that girt them round
Gazing, with souls that hung on that sad stroke,
Groaned, and kept silence after while a man
Might count how far the fresh blood crept, and bathed
How deep the dark robe and the bright shrine's base
Red-rounded with a running ring that grew
More large and duskier as the wells that fed
Were drained of that pure effluence : but the queen
Groaned not nor spake nor wept, but as a dream
Floats out of eyes awakening so past forth
Ghost-like, a shadow of sorrow, from all sight
To the inner court and chamber where she sits
Dumb, till word reach her of this whole day's end.

CHORUS.

More hapless born by far
Beneath some wintrier star,
One sits in stone among high Lydian snows,
The tomb of her own woes :
Yet happiest was once of the daughters of
Gods, and divine by her sire and her lord,
Ere her tongue was a shaft for the hearts of her sons, for the heart of her husband a sword.
For she, too great of mind,
Grown through her good things blind,
With goodless lips and fire of her own breath
Spake all her house to death ;
But thou, no mother unmothered, nor kindled in spirit with pride of thy seed,
Thou hast hallowed thy child for a blameless blood-offering, and ransomed thy race by thy deed.

MESSENGER.

As flower is graffed on flower, so grief on grief
Engraffed brings forth new blossoms of strange tears,
Fresh buds and green fruits of an alien pain ;
For now flies rumor on a dark wide wing,
Murmuring of woes more than ye knew, most like
Hers whom ye hailed most wretched ; for the twain
Last left of all this house that wore last night
A threefold crown of maidens, and to-day
Should let but one fall dead out of the wreath,
If mad with grief we know not and sore love
For this their sister, or with shame soul-stung
To outlive her dead or doubt lest their lives too
The Gods require to seal their country safe
And bring the oracular doom to perfect end,
Have slain themselves, and fallen at the altar-foot
Lie by their own hands done to death ; and fear
Shakes all the city as winds a wintering tree,
And as dead leaves are men's hearts blown about
And shrunken with ill thoughts, and flowerless hopes
Parched up with presage, lest the piteous blood
Shed of these maidens guiltless fall and fix
On this land's forehead like a curse that cleaves
To the unclean soul's inexpiate hunted head
Whom his own crime tracks hotlier than a hound
To life's veiled end unsleeping ; and this hour
Now blackens toward the battle that must close
All gates of hope and fear on all their hearts
Who tremble toward its issue, knowing not yet
If blood may buy them surety, cleanse or soil
The helpless hands men raise and reach no stay.

CHORUS.

Ill thoughts breed fear, and fear ill words ; but these
The Gods turn from us that have kept their law.
Let us lift up the strength of our hearts in song,
And our souls to the height of the darkling day.
If the wind in our eyes blow blood for spray,
Be the spirit that breathes in us life more strong,
Though the prow reel round and the helm point wrong,
And sharp reefs whiten the shoreward way.
For the steersman time sits hidden astern,
With dark hand plying the rudder of doom,
And the surf-smoke under it flies like fume
As the blast shears off and the oar-blades churn
The foam of our lives that to death return,
Blown back as they break to the gulfing gloom.
What cloud upon heaven is arisen, what shadow, what sound,
From the world beyond earth, from the night underground,
That scatters from wings unbeholden the weight of its darkness around ?
For the sense of my spirit is broken, and blinded its eye,
As the soul of a sick man ready to die,
With fear of the hour that is on me, with dread if an end be not nigh.
O Eearth, O Gods of the land, have ye heart now to see and to hear
What slays with terror mine eyesight and seals mine ear ?
O fountains of streams everlasting, are all ye not shrunk up and withered for fear ?
Lo, night is arisen on the noon, and her hounds are in quest by day,
And the world is fulfilled of the noise of them crying for their prey,
And the sun's self stricken in heaven, and cast out of his course as a blind man astray.
From east to west of the south sea-line
Glitters the lightning of spears that shine ;
As a storm-cloud swoln that comes up from the skirts of the sea
By the wind for helmsman to shoreward ferried,
So black behind them the live storm serried
Shakes earth with the tramp of its foot, and the terror to be.
Shall the sea give death whom the land gave birth ?
O Earth, fair mother, O sweet live Earth,
Hide us again in thy womb from the waves of it, help us or hide.
As a sword is the heart of the God thy brother,
But thine as the heart of a new-made mother
To deliver thy sons from his ravin, and rage of his tide.
O strong north wind, the pilot of cloud and rain,
For the gift we gave thee what gift hast thou given us again ?
O God dark-winged, deep-throated, a terror to forth-faring ships by night,
What bride-song is this that is blown on the blast of thy breath ?
A gift but of grief to thy kinsmen, a song but of death,
For the bride's folk weeping, and woe for her father, who finds thee against him in fight.
Turn back from us, turn thy battle, take heed of our cry ;
Let thy dread breath sound, and the waters of war be dry ;
Let thy strong wrath shatter the strength of foemen, the sword of their strength and the shield ;
As vapors in heaven, or as waves or the wrecks of ships,
So break thou the ranks of their spears with the breath of thy lips,
Till their corpses have covered and clothed as with raiment the face of the sword-ploughed field.
O son of the rose-red morning, O God twin-born with the day,
O wind with the young sun waking, and winged for the same wide way,
Give up not the house of thy kin to the host thou hast marshalled from northward for prey.
From the cold of thy cradle in Thrace, from the mists of the fountains of night,
From the bride-bed of dawn whence day leaps laughing, on fire for his flight,
Come down with their doom in thine hand on the ships thou hast brought up against us to fight.
For now not in word but in deed is the harvest of spears begun,
And its clamour outbellows the thunder, its lightning outlightens the sun

From the springs of the morning it thunders
and lightens across and afar
To the wave where the moonset ends and the
fall of the last low star.
With a trampling of drenched red hoofs and
an earthquake of men that meet,
Strong war sets hand to the scythe, and the
furrows take fire from his feet.
Earth groans from her great rent heart, and
the hollows of rocks are afraid,
And the mountains are moved, and the valleys
as waves in a storm-wind swayed.
From the roots of the hills to the plain's dim
verge and the dark loud shore,
Air shudders with shrill spears crossing, and
hurtling of wheels that roar.
As the grinding of teeth in the jaws of a lion
that foam as they gnash
Is the shriek of the axles that loosen, the shock
of the poles that crash.
The dense manes darken and glitter, the
mouths of the mad steeds champ,
Their heads flash blind through the battle,
and death's foot rings in their tramp.
For a fourfold host upon earth and in heaven
is arrayed for the fight,
Clouds ruining in thunder and armies encount-
ering as clouds in the night.
Mine ears are amazed with the terror of trum-
pets, with darkness mine eyes,
At the sound of the sea's host charging that
deafens the roar of the sky's.
White frontlet is dashed upon frontlet, and
horse against horse reels hurled,
And the gorge of the gulfs of the battle is wide
for the spoil of the world.
And the meadows are cumbered with shipwreck
of chariots that founder on land,
And the horsemen are broken with breach as
of breakers, and scattered as sand.
Through the roar and recoil of the charges
that mingle their cries and confound,
Like fire are the notes of the trumpets that
flash through the darkness of sound.
As the swing of the sea churned yellow that
sways with the wind as it swells
Is the lift and relapse of the wave of the char-
gers that clash with their bells;
And the clang of the sharp shrill brass through
the burst of the wave as it shocks
Rings clean as the clear wind's cry through
the roar of the surge on the rocks:
And the heads of the steeds in their headgear
of war, and their corsleted breasts,
Gleam broad as the brows of the billows that
brighten the storm with their crests,
Gleam dread as their bosoms that heave to the
shipwrecking wind as they rise,
Filled full of the terror and thunder of water,
that slays as it dies.
So dire is the glare of their foreheads, so fear-
ful the fire of their breath,
And the light of their eyeballs enkindled so
bright with the lightnings of death;
And the foam of their mouths as the sea's when
the jaws of its gulf are as graves,
And the ridge of their necks as the wind-shaken
mane on the ridges of waves:
And their fetlocks afire as they rear drip thick
with a dewfall of blood
As the lips of the rearing breaker with froth of
the manslaying flood.
And the whole plain reels and resounds as the
fields of the sea by night
When the stroke of the wind falls darkling,
and death is the seafarer's light.
But thou, fair beauty of heaven, dear face of
the day nigh dead,
What horror hath hidden thy glory, what hand
hath muffled thine head?
O sun, with what song shall we call thee, or
ward off thy wrath by what name,
With what prayer shall we seek to thee,
soothe with what incense, assuage with
what gift,
If thy light be such only as lightens to death-
ward the seamen adrift
With the fire of his house for a beacon, that
foemen have wasted with flame?
Arise now, lift up thy light; give ear to us,
put forth thine hand,
Reach toward us thy torch of deliverance, a
lamp for the night of the land.
Thine eye is the light of the living, no lamp
for the dead;
O, lift up the light of thine eye on the dark
of our dread.
Who hath blinded thee? who hath prevailed
on thee? who hath ensnared?
Who hath broken thy bow, and the shafts
for thy battle prepared?
Have they found out a fetter to bind thee, a
chain for thine arm that was bared?
Be the name of thy conqueror set forth, and
the might of thy master declared.
O God, fair God of the morning, O glory of
day,
What ails thee to cast from thy forehead its
garland away?

To pluck from thy temples their chaplet enwreathed of the light,
And bind on the brows of thy godhead a frontlet of night?
Thou hast loosened the necks of thine horses, and goaded their flanks with affright,
To the race of a course that we know not on ways that are hid from our sight.
As a wind through the darkness the wheels of their chariot are whirled,
And the light of its passage is night on the face of the world.
And there falls from the wings of thy glory no help from on high,
But a shadow that smites us with fear and desire of thine eye.
For our hearts are as reeds that a wind on the water bows down and goes by,
To behold not thy comfort in heaven that hath left us untimely to die.
But what light is it now leaps forth on the land
Enkindling the waters and ways of the air
From thy forehead made bare,
From the gleam of thy bow-bearing hand?
Hast thou set not thy right hand again to the string,
With the back-bowed horns bent sharp for a spring
And the barbed shaft drawn,
Till the shrill steel sing and the tense nerve ring
That pierces the heart of the dark with dawn,
O huntsman, O king,
When the flame of thy face hath twilight in chase
As a hound hath a blood-mottled fawn?
He has glanced into golden the grey sea-strands,
And the clouds are shot through with the fires of his hands,
And the height of the hollow of heaven that he fills
As the heart of a strong man is quickened and thrills;
High over the folds of the low-lying lands,
On the shadowless hills
As a guard on his watchtower he stands.
All earth and all ocean, all depth and all height,
At the flash of an eyebeam are filled with his might:
The sea roars backward, the storm drops dumb,
And silence as dew on the fire of the fight
Falls kind in our ears as his face in our sight
With presage of peace to come.
Fresh hope in my heart from the ashes of dread
Leaps clear as a flame from the pyres of the dead,
That joy out of woe
May arise as the spring out of the tempest and snow,
With the flower-feasted month in her hands rose-red
Borne soft as a babe from the bearing-bed.
Yet it knows not indeed if a God be friend,
If rescue may be from the rage of the sea,
Or the wrath of its lord have end.
For the season is full now of death or of birth,
To bring forth life, or an end of all;
And we know not if anything stand or fall
That is girdled about with the round sea's girth
As a town with its wall;
But thou that art highest of the Gods most high,
That art lord if we live, that art lord though we die,
Have heed of the tongues of our terror that cry
For a grace to the children of Earth.

ATHENIAN HERALD.

Sons of Athens, heavy-laden with the holy weight of years,
Be your hearts as young men's lightened of their loathlier load of fears;
For the wave is sunk whose thunder shoreward shook the shuddering lands
And unbreached of warring waters Athens like a sea-rock stands.

CHORUS.

Well thy word has cheered us, well thy face and glittering eyes, that spake
Ere thy tongue spake words of comfort; yet no pause behoves it make
Till the whole good hap find utterance that the Gods have given at length.

ATHENIAN HERALD.

All is this, that yet the city stand unforced by stranger strength.

CHORUS.

Sweeter sound might no mouth utter in man's ear than this thy word.

ATHENIAN HERALD.

Feed thy soul then full of sweetness till some bitter note be heard.

CHORUS.

None, if this ring sure, can mar the music fallen from heaven as rain.

ATHENIAN HERALD.

If no fire of sun or star untimely sear the tender grain.

CHORUS.

Fresh the dewfall of thy tidings on our hopes reflowering lies.

ATHENIAN HERALD.

Till a joyless shower and fruitless blight them, raining from thine eyes.

CHORUS.

Bitter springs have barren issues ; these bedew grief's arid sands.

ATHENIAN HERALD.

Such thank-offerings ask such altars as expect thy suppliant hands.

CHORUS.

Tears for triumph, wail for welfare, what strange godhead's shrine requires ?

ATHENIAN HERALD.

Death or victory's be it, a funeral torch feeds all its festal fires.

CHORUS.

Like a star should burn the beacon flaming from our city's head.

ATHENIAN HERALD.

Like a balefire should the flame go up that says the king is dead.

CHORUS.

Out of heaven, a wild-haired meteor, shoots this new sign, scattering fear.

ATHENIAN HERALD.

Yea, the word has wings of fire that hovered, loth to burn thine ear.

CHORUS.

From thy lips it leapt forth loosened on a shrill and shadowy wing.

ATHENIAN HERALD.

Long they faltered, fain to hide it deep as death that hides the king.

CHORUS.

Dead with him blind hope lies blasted by the lightning of one sword.

ATHENIAN HERALD.

On thy tongue truth wars with error ; no man's edge hath touched thy lord.

CHORUS.

False was thine then, jangling menace like a warsteed's brow-bound bell ?

ATHENIAN HERALD.

False it rang not joy nor sorrow ; but by no man's hand he fell.

CHORUS.

Vainly then good news and evil through so faint a trumpet spake.

ATHENIAN HERALD.

All too long thy soul yet labors, as who sleeping fain would wake,

Waking, fain would fall on sleep again ; the woe thou knowest not yet,
When thou knowest, shall make thy memory thirst and hunger to forget.

CHORUS.

Long my heart has hearkened, hanging on thy clamorous ominous cry,
Fain yet fearful of the knowledge whence it looks to live or die :
Now to take the perfect presage of thy dark and side-long flight
Comes a surer soothsayer sorrowing, sable-stoled as birds of night.

PRAXITHEA.

Man, what thy mother bare thee born to say
Speak ; for no word yet wavering on thy lip
Can wound me worse than thought forestalls or fear.

ATHENIAN HERALD.

I have no will to weave too fine or far,
O queen, the weft of sweet with bitter speech,
Bright words with darkling ; but the brief truth shown
Shall plead my pardon for a lingering tongue,
Loth yet to strike hope through the heart and slay.
The sun's light still was lordly housed in heaven
When the twain fronts of war encountering smote
First fire out of the battle ; but not long
Had the fresh wave of windy fight begun
Heaving, and all the surge of swords to sway,
When timeless night laid hold of heaven, and took
With its great gorge the noon as in a gulf,
Strangled ; and thicker than the shrill-winged shafts
Flew the fleet lightnings, held in chase through heaven
By headlong heat of thunders on their trail
Loosed as on quest of quarry ; that our host
Smit with sick presage of some wrathful God
Quailed, but the foe as from one iron throat
With one great sheer sole thousand-throated cry
Shook earth, heart-staggered from their shout, and clove
The eyeless hollow of heaven ; and breached therewith
As with an onset of strength-shattering sound
The rent vault of the roaring noon of night
From her throned seat of usurpation rang
Reverberate answer ; such response there pealed
As though the tide's charge of a storming sea
Had burst the sky's wall, and made broad a breach
In the ambient girth and bastion flanked with stars
Guarding the fortress of the Gods, and all
Crashed now together on ruin ; and through that cry
And higher above it ceasing one man's note
Tore its way like a trumpet : *Charge, make end,*
Charge, halt not, strike, rend up their strength by the roots,
Strike, break them, make your birthright's promise sure,
Show your hearts hardier than the fenced land breeds
And souls breathed in you from no spirit of earth,
Sons of the sea's waves ; and all ears that heard
Rang with that fiery cry, that the fine air
Thereat was fired, and kindling filled the plain
Full of that fierce and trumpet-quenching breath
That spake the clarions silent ; no glad song
For folk to hear that wist how dire a God
Begat this peril to them, what strong race
Fathered the sea-born tongue that sang them death,
Threatening ; so raged through the red foam of fight
Poseidon's son Eumolpus ; and the war
Quailed round him coming, and our side bore back,
As a stream thwarted by the wind and sea
That meet it midway mouth to mouth, and beat
The flood back of its issue ; but the king
Shouted against them, crying, *O Father-God,*
Source of the God my father, from thine hand
Send me what end seems good now in thy sight,
But death from mine to this man ; and the word
Quick on his lips yet like a blast of fire
Blew them together ; and round its lord that met
Paused all the reeling battle ; two main waves
Meeting, one hurled sheer from the sea-wall back
That shocks it sideways, one right in from sea
Charging, that full in face takes at one blow
That whole recoil and ruin, with less fear
Startle men's eyes late shipwrecked ; for a breath

Crest fronting crest hung, wave to wave rose poised,
Then clashed, breaker to breaker ; cloud with cloud
In heaven, chariot with chariot closed on earth,
One fourfold flash and thunder ; yet a breath,
And with the king's spear through his red heart's root
Driven, like a rock split from its hill-side, fell
Hurled under his own horsehoofs dead on earth
The sea-beast that made war on earth from sea,
Dumb, with no shrill note left of storming song,
Eumolpus ; and his whole host with one stroke
Spear-stricken through its dense deep iron heart
Fell hurtling from us, and in fierce recoil
Drew seaward as with one wide wail of waves,
Resorbed with reluctation ; such a groan
Rose from the fluctuant refluence of its ranks,
Sucked sullen back and strengthless ; but scarce yet
The steeds had sprung and wheels had bruised their lord
Fallen, when from highest height of the sundering heaven
The Father for his brother's son's sake slain
Sent a sheer shaft of lightning writhen and smote
Right on his son's son's forehead, that unhelmed
Shone like the star that shines down storm, and gave
Light to men's eyes that saw thy lord their king
Stand and take breath from battle ; then too soon
Saw sink down as a sunset in sea-mist
The high bright head that here in van of the earth
Rose like a headland, and through storm and night
Took all the sea's wrath on it ; and now dead
They bring thee back by war-forsaken ways
The strength called once thy husband, the great guard
That was of all men, stay of all men's lives,
They bear him slain of no man but a God,
Godlike ; and toward him dead the city's gates
Fling their arms open mother like, through him
Saved ; and the whole clear land is purged of war.
What wilt thou say now of this weal and woe ?

PRAXITHEA.

I praise the Gods for Athens. O sweet Earth,
Mother, what joy thy soul has of thy son,
Thy life of my dead lord, mine own soul knows
That knows thee godlike ; and what grief should mine,
What sorrow should my heart have, who behold
Thee made so heavenlike happy ? This alone
I only of all these blessed, all thy kind,
Crave this for blessing to me, that in theirs
Have but a part thus bitter ; give me too
Death, and the sight of eyes that meet not mine.
And thee too from no godless heart or tongue
Reproachful, thee too by thy living name,
Father divine, merciful God, I call,
Spring of my life-springs, fountain of my stream,
Pure and poured forth to one great end with thine,
Sweet head sublime of triumph and these tears,
Cephisus, if thou seest as gladly shed
Thy blood in mine as thine own waves are given
To do this great land good, to give for love
The same lips drink and comfort the same hearts,
Do thou then, O my father, white-souled God,
To thy most pure earth-hallowing heart eterne
Take what thou gavest to be given for these,
Take thy child to thee ; for her time is full,
For all she hath borne she hath given, seen all she had
Flow from her, from her eyes and breasts and hands
Flow forth to feed this people ; but be thou,
Dear God and gracious to all souls alive,
Good to thine own seed also ; let me sleep,
Father ; my sleepless darkling day is done,
My day of life like night, but slumberless :
For all my fresh fair springs, and his that ran
In one stream's bed with mine, are all run out
Into the deep of death. The Gods have saved
Athens ; my blood has bought her at their hand,
And ye sit safe ; be glorious and be glad
As now for all time always, countrymen,
And love my dead for ever ; but me, me,
What shall man give for these so good as death ?

CHORUS.

From the cup of my heart I pour through my lips along
The mingled wine of a joyful and sorrowful song ;
Wine sweeter than honey and bitterer than blood that is poured

From the chalice of gold, from the point of the two-edged sword.
For the city redeemed should joy flow forth as a flood,
And a dirge make moan for the city polluted with blood.
Great praise should the Gods have surely, my country, of thee,
Were thy brow but as white as of old for thy sons to see,
Were thy hands as bloodless, as blameless thy cheek divine ;
But a stain on it stands of the life-blood offered for thine.
What thanks shall we give that are mixed not and marred with dread
For the price that has ransomed thine own with thine own child's head ?
For a taint there cleaves to the people redeemed with blood,
And a plague to the blood-red hand.
The rain shall not cleanse it, the dew nor the sacred flood
That blesses the glad live land.
In the darkness of earth beneath, in the world without sun,
The shadows of past things reign ;
And a cry goes up from the ghost of an ill deed done,
And a curse for a virgin slain.

ATHENA.

Hear, men that mourn, and woman without mate,
Hearken ; ye sick of soul with fear, and thou
Dumb-stricken for thy children ; hear ye too,
Earth, and the glory of heaven, and winds of the air,
And the most holy heart of the deep sea,
Late worth, now full of quiet ; hear thou, sun,
Rolled round with the upper fire of rolling heaven
And all the stars returning ; hill and streams,
Springs and fresh fountains, day that seest these deeds,
Night that shalt hide not ; and thou child of mine,
Child of a maiden, by a maid redeemed,
Blood-guiltless, though bought back with innocent blood,
City mine own ; I Pallas bring thee word,
I virgin daughter of the most high God
Give all you charge and lay command on all
The word I bring be wasted not ; for this
The Gods have stablished and his soul hath sworn,
That time nor earth nor changing sons of ma
Nor waves of generations, nor the winds
Of ages risen and fallen that steer their tides
Through light and dark of birth and lovelier death
From storm toward haven inviolable, shall see
So great a light alive beneath the sun
As the awless eye of Athens ; all fame else
Shall be to her fame as a shadow in sleep
To this wide noon at waking ; men most praised
In lands most happy for their children found
Shall hold as highest of honors given of God
To be but likened to the least of thine,
Thy least of all, my city ; thine shall be
The crown of all songs sung, of all deeds done
Thine the full flower for all time ; in thine hand
Shall time be like a sceptre, and thine head
Wear worship for a garland ; nor one leaf
Shall change or winter cast out of thy crown
Till all flowers wither in the world ; thine eyes
Shall first in man's flash lightning liberty,
Thy tongue shall first say freedom ; thy first hand
Shall loose the thunder terror as a hound
To hunt from sunset to the springs of the sun
Kings that rose up out of the populous east
To make their quarry of thee, and shall strew
With multitudinous limbs of myriad herds
The foodless pastures of the sea, and make
With wrecks immeasurable and unsummed defeat
One ruin of all their many-folded flocks
Ill shepherded from Asia ; by thy side
Shall fight thy son the north wind, and the sea
That was thine enemy shall be sworn thy friend
And hand be struck in hand of his and thine
To hold faith fast for aye ; with thee, though each
Make war on other, wind and sea shall keep
Peace, and take truce as brethren for thy sake
Leagued with one spirit and single-hearted strength
To break thy foes in pieces, who shall meet
The wind's whole soul and might of the main sea
Full in their face of battle, and become
A laughter to thee ; like a shower of leaves
Shall their long galleys rank by staggering rank
Be dashed adrift on ruin, and in thy sight
The sea deride them, and that lord of the air
Who took by violent hand thy child to wife
With his loud lips bemock them, by his breath
Swept out of sight of being ; so great a grace

Shall this day give thee, that makes one in heart
With mine the deep sea's godhead, and his son
With him that was thine helmsman, king with king,
Dead man with dead ; such only names as these
Shalt thou call royal, take none else or less
To hold of men in honor ; but with me
Shall these be worshiped as one God, and mix
With mine the might of their mysterious names
In one same shrine served singly, thence to keep
Perpetual guard on Athens ; time and change,
Masters and lords of all men, shall be made
To thee that knowest no master and no lord
Servants ; the days that lighten heaven and nights
That darken shall be ministers of thine
To attend upon thy glory, the great years
As light-engraven letters of thy name
Writ by the sun's hand on the front of the earth
For world-beholden witness ; such a gift
For one fair chaplet of three lives enwreathed
To hang for ever from thy storied shrine,
And this thy steersman fallen with tiller in hand
To stand for ever at thy ship's helm seen,
Shall he that bade their threefold flower be shorn
And laid him low that planted, give thee back
In sign of sweet land reconciled with sea
And heavenlike earth with heaven ; such promise-pledge
I daughter without mother born of God
To the most woful mother born of man
Plight for continual comfort. Hail, and live
Beyond all human hap of mortal doom
Happy ; for so my sire hath sworn and I.

PRAXITHEA.

O queen Athena, from a heart made whole
Take as thou givest us blessing ; never tear
Shall stain for shame nor groan untune the song
That as a bird shall spread and fold its wings
Here in thy praise for ever, and fulfil
The whole world's crowning city crowned with thee
As the sun's eye fulfils and crowns with sight
The circling crown of heaven. There is no grief
Great as the joy to be made one in will
With him that is the heart and rule of life
And thee, God born of God ; thy name is ours,
And thy large grace more great than our desire.

CHORUS.

From the depth of the springs of my spirit a fountain is poured of thanksgiving,
My country, my mother, for thee,
That thy dead for their death shall have life in thy sight and a name everliving
At heart of thy people to be.
In the darkness of change on the waters of time they shall turn from afar
To the beam of this dawn for a beacon, the light of these pyres for a star.
They shall see thee who love and take comfort, who hate thee shall see and take warning,
Our mother that makest us free ;
And the sons of thine earth shall have help of the waves that made war on their morning,
And friendship and fame of the sea.

STUDIES IN SONG.

SONG FOR THE CENTENARY

OF

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR.

BORN JANUARY 30TH, 1775.

DIED SEPTEMBER 17TH, 1864.

There is delight in singing, though none hear
Beside the singer: and there is delight
In praising, though the praiser sit alone
And see the praised far off him, far above.

LANDOR.

DEDICATION.

TO MRS. LYNN LINTON.

Daughter in spirit elect and consecrate
By love and reverence of the Olympian sire
Whom I too loved and worshipped, seeing so great,
And found so gracious toward my long desire
To bid that love in song before his gate
Sound, and my lute be loyal to his lyre,
To none save one it now may dedicate
Song's new burnt-offering on a century's pyre.
And though the gift be light
As ashes in men's sight,
Left by the flame of no ethereal fire,
Yet, for his worthier sake
Than words are worthless, take
This wreath of words ere yet their hour expire:
So, haply, from some heaven above,
He, seeing, may set next yours my sacrifice of love.

May 24, 1880.

1.

FIVE years beyond an hundred years have seen
Their winters, white as faith's and age's hue,
Melt, smiling through brief tears that broke between,
And hope's young conquering colors reared anew,
Since, on the day whose edge for kings made keen
Smote sharper once than ever storm-wind blew,
A head predestined for the girdling green
That laughs at lightning all the seasons through,
Nor frost or change can sunder
Its crown untouched of thunder
Leaf from least leaf of all its leaves that grew
Alone for brows too bold
For storm to sear of old,
Elect to shine in time's eternal view,
Rose on the verge of radiant life
Between the winds and sunbeams mingling love with strife.

2.

The darkling day that gave its bloodred birth
To Milton's white republic undefiled
That might endure so few fleet years on earth
Bore in him likewise as divine a child;
But born not less for crowns of love and mirth,
Of palm and myrtle passionate and mild,
The leaf that girds about with gentler girth
The brow steel-bound in battle, and the wild
Soft spray that flowers above
The flower-soft hair of love;
And the white lips of wayworn winter smiled
And grew serene as spring's
When with stretched clouds like wings
Or wings like drift of snow-clouds massed and piled
The godlike giant, softening, spread
A shadow of stormy shelter round the new-born head.

3.

And o'er it brightening bowed the wild-haired hour,
And touched his tongue with honey and with fire,
And breathed between his lips the note of power
That makes of all the winds of heaven a lyre
Whose strings are stretched from topmost peaks that tower
To softest springs of waters that suspire,
With sounds too dim to shake the lowliest flower
Breathless with hope and dauntless with desire :
And bright before his face
That Hour became a Grace,
As in the light of their Athenian quire
When the Hours before the sun
And Graces were made one,
Called by sweet Love down from the aerial gyre
By one dear name of natural joy,
To bear on her bright breast from heaven a heaven-born boy.

4.

Ere light could kiss the little lids in sunder
Or love could lift them for the sun to smite,
His fiery birth-star as a sign of wonder
Had risen, perplexing the presageful night
With shadow and glory around her sphere and under
And portents prophesying by sound and sight ;
And half the sound was song and half was thunder,
And half his life of lightning, half of light :
And in the soft clenched hand
Shone like a burning brand
A shadowy sword for swordless fields of fight,
Wrought only for such lord
As so may wield the sword
That all things ill be put to fear and flight
Even at the flash and sweep and gleam
Of one swift stroke beheld but in a shuddering dream.

5.

Like the sun's rays that blind the night's wild beasts
The sword of song shines as the swordsman sings ;
From the west wind's verge even to the arduous east's
The splendor of the shadow that it flings
Makes fire and storm in heaven above the feasts
Of men fulfilled with food of evil things ;
Strikes dumb the lying and hungering lips of priests,
Smites dead the slaying and ravening hands of kings ;
Turns dark the lamp's hot light,
And turns the darkness bright
As with the shadow of dawn's reverberate wings ;
And far before its way
Heaven, yearning toward the day,
Shines with its thunder and round its lightning rings ;
And never hand yet earlier played
With that keen sword whose hilt is cloud, and fire its blade.

6

As dropping flakes of honey-heavy dew
More soft than slumber's, fell the first note's sound
From strings the swift young hand strayed lightlier through
Than leaves through calm air wheeling toward the ground
Stray down the drifting wind when skies are blue
Nor yet the wings of latter winds unbound,
Ere winter loosen all the Æolian crew
With storm unleashed behind them like a hound.
As lightly rose and sank
Beside a green-flowered bank
The clear first notes his burning boyhood found
To sing her sacred praise
Who rode her city's ways
Clothed with bright hair and with high purpose crowned ;
A song of soft presageful breath,
Prefiguring all his love and faith in life and death ;

7.

Who should love two things only and only praise
More than all else for ever: even the glory
Of goodly beauty in women, whence all days
Take light whereby death's self seems transitory;
And loftier love than loveliest eyes can raise,
Love that wipes off the miry stains and gory
From Time's worn feet, besmirched on blood-red ways,
And lightens with his light the night of story;
Love that lifts up from dust
Life, and makes darkness just,
And purges as with fire of purgatory
The dense disastrous air,
To burn old falsehood bare
And give the wind its ashes heaped and hoary;
Love, that with eyes of ageless youth
Sees on the breast of Freedom borne her nursling Truth.

8.

For at his birth the sistering stars were one
That flamed upon it as one fiery star;
Freedom, whose light makes pale the mounting sun,
And Song, whose fires are quenched when Freedom's are.
Of all that love not liberty let none
Love her that fills our lips with fire from far
To mix with winds and seas in unison
And sound athwart life's tideless harbor-bar
Out where our songs fly free
Across time's bounded sea,
A boundless flight beyond the dim's sun car,
Till all the spheres of night
Chime concord round their flight
Too loud for blasts of warring change to mar,
From stars that sang for Homer's birth
To these that gave our Landor welcome back from earth.

9.

Shine, as above his cradle, on his grave,
Stars of our worship, lights of our desire!
For never man that heard the world's wind rave
To you was truer in trust of heart and lyre:
Nor Greece nor England on a brow more brave
Behold your flame against the wind burn higher:
Nor all the gusts that blanch life's worldly wave
With surf and surge could quench its flawless fire:
No blast of all that blow
Might bid the torch burn low
That lightens on us yet as o'er his pyre,
Indomitable of storm,
That now no flaws deform
Nor thwart winds baffle ere it all aspire,
One light of godlike breath and flame,
To write on heaven with man's most glorious names his name.

10.

The very dawn was dashed with stormy dew
And freaked with fire as when God's hand would mar
Palaces reared of tyrants, and the blue
Deep heaven was kindled round her thunderous car,
That saw how swift a gathering glory grew
About him risen, ere clouds could blind or bar
A splendor strong to burn and burst them through
And mix in one sheer light things near and far.
First flew before his path
Light shafts of love and wrath,
But winged and edged as elder warriors' are;
Then rose a light that showed
Across the midsea road
From radiant Calpe to revealed Masar
The way of war and love and fate
Between the goals of fear and fortune, hop and hate.

11.

Mine own twice banished fathers' harbor-land,
Their nursing-mother France, the well-beloved,
By the arduous blast of sanguine sunrise fanned,
Flamed on him, and his burning lips were moved
As that live statue's throned on Lybian sand
When morning moves it, ere her light faith roved

From promise, and her tyrant's poisonous hand
Fed hope with Corsic honey till she proved
More deadly than despair
And falser even than fair,
Though fairer than all elder hopes removed
As landmarks by the crime
Of inundating time ;
Light faith by grief too loud too long reproved :
For even as in some darkling dance
Wronged love changed hands with hate, and turned his heart from France.

12.

But past the snows and summits Pyrenean
Love stronger-winged held more prevailing flight,
That o'er Tyrrhene, Iberian, and Ægean
Shores lightened with one storm of sound and light.
From earliest even to hoariest years one pæan
Rang rapture through the fluctuant roar of fight,
From Nestor's tongue in accents Achillean
On death's blind verge dominant over night.
For voice as hand and hand
As voice for one fair land
Rose radiant, smote sonorous, past the height
Where darkling pines enrobe
The steel-cold Lake of Gaube,
Deep as dark death and keen as death to smite,
To where on peak or moor or plain
His heart and song and sword were one to strike for Spain.

13.

Resurgent at his lifted voice and hand
Pale in the light of war or treacherous fate
Song bade before him all their shadows stand
For whom his will unbarred their funeral grate.
The father by whose wrong revenged his land
Was given for sword and fire to desolate
Rose fire-encircled as a burning brand,
Great as the woes he wrought and bore were great.
Fair as she smiled and died,
Death's crowned and breathless bride
Smiled as one living even on craft and hate :
And pity, a star unrisen,
Scarce lit Ferrante's prison
Ere night unnatural closed the natural gate
That gave their life and love and light
To those fair eyes despoiled by fratricide of sight.

14.

Tears bright and sweet as fire and incense fell
In perfect notes of music-measured pain
On veiled sweet heads that heard not love's farewell
Sob through the song that bade them rise again ;
Rise in the light of living song, to dwell
With memories crowned of memory : so the strain
Made soft as heaven the stream that girdles hell
And sweet the darkness of the breathless plain,
And with Elysian flowers
Recrowned the wreathless hours
That mused and mourned upon their works in vain ;
For all their works of death
Song filled with light and breath,
And listening grief relaxed her lightening chain ;
For sweet as all the wide sweet south
She found the song like honey from the lion's mouth.

15.

High from his throne in heavens Simonides,
Crowned with mild aureole of memorial tears
That the everlasting sun of all time sees
All golden, molten from the forge of years,
Smiled, as the gift was laid upon his knees
Of song that hang like pearls in mourners ears,
Mild as the murmuring of Hymettian bees
And honied as their harvest, that endears
The toil of flowery days ;
And smiling perfect praise
Hailed his one brother mateless else on peers :
Whom we that hear not him
For length of date grown dim
Hear, and the heart grows glad of grief that hears ;
And harshest heights of sorrowing hours,
Like snows of Alpine April, melt from tears to flowers.

16.

Therefore to him the shadow of death was none,
The darkness was not, nor the temporal tomb :
And multitudinous time for him was one,
Who bade before his equal seat of doom
Rise and stand up for judgment in the sun
The weavers of the world's large-historied loom,
By their own works of light or darkness done
Clothed round with light or girt about with gloom.
In speech of purer gold
Than even they spake of old
He bade the breath of Sidney's lips relume
The fire of thought and love
That made his bright life move
Through fair brief seasons of benignant bloom
To blameles music ever, strong
As death and sweet as death-annihilating song.

17.

Thought gave his wings the width of time to roam,
Love gave his thought strength equal to release
From bonds of old forgetful years like foam
Vanished, the fame of memories that decrease ;
So strongly faith had fledged for flight from home
The soul's large pinions till her strife should cease :
And through the trumpet of a child of Rome
Rang the pure music of the flutes of Greece.
As though some northern hand
Reft from the Latin land
A spoil more costly than the Colchian fleece
To clothe with golden sound
Of old joy newly found
And rapture as of penetrating peace
The naked north-wind's cloudiest clime,
And give its darkness light of the old Sicilian time.

18.

He saw the brand that fired the towers of Troy
Fade, and the darkness at Œnone's prayer
Close upon her that closed upon her boy,
For all the curse of godhead that she bare ;
And the Apollonian serpent gleam and toy
With scathless maiden limbs and shuddering hair ;
And his love smitten in their dawn of joy
Leave Pan the pine-leaf of her charge to wear ;
And one in flowery coils
Caught as in fiery toils
Smite Calydon with mourning unaware :
And where her low turf shrine
Showed Modesty divine
The fairest mother's daughter far more fair
Hide on her breast the heavenly shame
That kindled once with love should kindle Troy with flame.

19.

Nor less the light of story than of song
With graver glories girt his godlike head,
Reverted alway from the temporal throng
Of lives that live not toward the living dead.
The shadows and the splendors of their throng
Made bright and dark about his board and bed
The lines of life and vision, sweet or strong
With sound of lutes or trumpets blown, that led
Forth of the ghostly gate
Opening in spite of fate
Shapes of majestic or tumultuous tread,
Divine and direful things,
These foul as priests or kings,
Those fair as heaven or love of freedom, red
With blood and green with palms and white
With raiment woven of deeds divine and words of light.

20.

The thunder-fire of Cromwell, and the ray
That keeps the place of Phocion's name serene
And clears the cloud from Kosciusko's day,
Alternate as dark hours with bright between,
Met in the heaven of his high thought, which lay
For all stars open that all eyes had seen
Rise on the night or twilight of the way
Where feet of human hopes and fears had been.
Again the sovereign word
On Milton's lips was heard
Living again the tender three days' queen

Drew bright and gentle breath
On the sharp edge of death:
And, staged again to show of mortal scene,
Tiberius, ere his name grew dire,
Wept, stainless yet of empire, tears of blood and fire.

21.

Most ardent and most awful and most fond,
The fervor of his Apollonian eye
Yearned upon Hellas, yet enthralled in bond
Of time whose years beheld her and passed by
Silent and shameful, till she rose and donned
The casque again of Pallas; for her cry
Forth of the past and future, depths beyond
This where the present and its tyrants lie,
As one great voice of twain
For him had pealed again,
Heard but of hearts high as her own was high,
High as her own and his
And pure as love's heart is,
That lives through hope at once and memory die:
And with her breath his clarion's blast
Was filled as cloud with fire or future souls with past.

22.

As a wave only obsequious to the wind
Leaps to the lifting breeze that bids it leap,
Large-hearted, and its thickening mane be thinned
By the strong god's breath moving on the deep
From utmost Atlas even the extremest Ind
That shakes the plain where no men sow nor reap,
So, moved with wrath toward men that ruled and sinned
And pity toward all tears he saw men weep,
Arose to take man's part
His loving lion heart,
Kind as the sun's that has in charge to keep
Earth and the seed thereof
Safe in his lordly love,
Strong as sheer truth and soft as very sleep;
The mightiest heart since Milton's leapt,
The gentlest since the gentlest heart of Shakespeare slept.

23.

Like the wind's own on her divided sea
His song arose on Corinth, and aloud
Recalled her Isthmian song and strife when she
Was thronged with glories as with gods in crowd
And as the wind's own spirit her breath was free
And as the heaven's own heart her soul was proud,
But freer and prouder stood no son than he
Of all she bare before her heart was bowed;
None higher than he who heard
Medea's keen last word
Transpierce her traitor, and like a rushing cloud
That sundering shows a star
Saw pass her thunderous car
And a face whiter and deadlier than a shroud
That lightened from it, and the brand
Of tender blood that falling seared his suppliant hand.

24.

More fair than all things born and slain of fate,
More glorious than all births of days and nights,
He bade the spirit of man regenerate,
Rekindling, rise and reassume the rights
That in high seasons of his old estate
Clothed him and armed with majesties and mights
Heroic, when the times and hearts were great
And in the depths of ages rose the heights
Radiant of high deeds done
And souls that matched the sun
For splendor with the lightnings of their lights
Whence even their uttered names
Burn like the strong twin flames
Of song that shakes a throne and steel that smites;
As on Thermopylæ when shone
Leonidas, on Syracuse Timoleon.

25.

Or, sweeter than the breathless buds when spring
With smiles and tears and kisses bids them breathe,
Fell with its music from his quiring string

Fragrance of pine-leaves and odorous heath
Twined round the lute whereto he sighed to sing
Of the oak that screened and showed its mate beneath,
Who seeing her bee crawl back with broken wing
Faded, a fairer flower than all her wreath,
And paler, though her oak
Stood scathless of the stroke
More sharp than edge of axe or wolfish teeth,
That mixed with mortals dead
Her own half heavenly head
And life incorporate with a sylvan sheath,
And left the wild rose and the dove
A secret place and sacred from all guests but Love.

26.

But in the sweet clear fields beyond the river
Dividing pain from peace and man from shade
He saw the wings that there no longer quiver
Sink of the hours whose parting footfalls fade
On ears which hear the rustling amaranth shiver
With sweeter sound of wind than ever made
Music on earth : departing, they deliver
The soul that shame or wrath or sorrow swayed ;
And round the king of men
Clash the clear arms again,
Clear of all soil and bright as laurel braid,
That rang less high for joy
Through the gates fallen of Troy
Than here to hail the sacrificial maid,
Iphigeneia, when the ford
Fast-flowing of sorrows brought her father and their lord.

27.

And in the clear gulf of the hollow sea
He saw light glimmering through the grave green gloom
That hardly gave the sun's eye leave to see
Cymodameia ; but nor tower nor tomb,
No tower on earth, no tomb of waves may be,
That may not sometime by diviner doom
Be plain and previous to the poet ; he
Bids time stand back from him and fate make room
For passage of his feet,
Strong as their own are fleet,
And yield the prey no years may reassume
Through all their clamorous track,
Nor night nor day win back
Nor give to darkness what his eyes illume
And his lips bless for ever : he
Knows what earth knows not, sings truth sung not of the sea.

28.

Before the sentence of a curule chair
More sacred than the Roman, rose and stood
To take their several doom the imperial pair
Diversely borne of Venus, and in mood
Diverse as their one mother, and as fair,
Though like two stars contrasted, and as good
Though different as dark eyes from golden hair ;
One as that iron planet red like blood
That bears among the stars
Fierce witness of her Mars
In bitter fire by her sweet light subdued ;
One in the gentler skies
Sweet as her amorous eyes ;
One proud of worlds and seas and darkness rude
Composed and conquered ; one content
With lightnings from loved eyes of lovers lightly sent.

29.

And where Alpheus and where Ladon ran
Radiant, by many a rushy and rippling cove
More known to glance of god than wandering man,
He sang the strife of strengths divine that strove,
Unequal, one with other, for a span,
Who should be friends forever in heaven above
And here on pastoral earth : Arcadian Pan,
And the awless lord of kings and shepherds, Love :
All the sweet strife and strange
With fervid counterchange
Till one fierce wail through many a glade and grove
Rang, and its breath made shiver
The reeds of many a river,
And the warm airs waxed wintry that it clove,
Keen-edged as ice-retempered brand ;
Nor might god's hurt find healing save of god like hand.

30.

As when the jarring gates of thunder ope
Like earthquake felt in heaven, so dire a cry,
So fearful and so fierce—'Give the sword scope!'—
Rang from a daughter's lips, darkening the sky
To the extreme azure of all its cloudless cope
With starless horror; nor the god's own eye
Whose doom bade smite, whose ordinance bade hope,
Might well endure to see the adulteress die,
The husband-slayer fordone
By swordstroke of her son,
Unutterable, unimaginable on high,
On earth abhorrent, fell
Beyond all scourge of hell,
Yet righteous as redemption: Love stood nigh,
Mute, sister-like, and closer clung
Than all fierce forms of threatening coil and maddening tongue.

31.

All these things heard and seen and sung of old,
He heard and saw and sang them. Once again
Might foot of man tread, eye of man behold
Things unbeholden save of ancient men,
Ways save by gods untrodden. In his hold
The staff that stayed through some Ætnean glen
The steps of the most highest, most awful-souled
And mightiest-mouthed of singers, even as then
Became a prophet's rod,
A lyre on fire of God,
Being still the staff of exile: yea, as when
The voice poured forth on us
Was even of Æschylus,
And his one word great as the crying of ten,
Crying in men's ears of wrath toward wrong,
Of love toward right immortal, sanctified with song.

32.

Him too whom none save one before him ever
Beheld, nor since hath man again beholden,
Whom Dante seeing him saw not, nor the giver
Of all gifts back to man by time witholden,
Shakespeare—him too, whom sea-like ages sever,
As waves divide men's eyes from lights upholden
To landward, from our songs that find him never,
Seeking, though memory fire and hope embolden—
Him too this one song found,
And raised at its sole sound
Up from the dust of darkling dreams and olden
Legends forlorn of breath.
Up from the deeps of death
Ulysses: him whose name turns all songs golden,
The wise divine strong soul, whom fate
Could make no less than change and chance beheld him great.

33.

Nor stands the seer who raised him less august
Before us, nor in judgment frail and rathe,
Less constant or less loving or less just,
But fruitful-ripe and full of tender faith,
Holding all high and gentle names in trust
Of time for honor; so his quickening breath
Called from the darkness of their martyred dust
Our sweet Saints Alice and Elizabeth,
Revived and reinspired
With speech from heavenward fired
By love to say what Love the Archange saith
Only, nor may such word
Save by such ears be heard
As hear the tongues of angels after death
Descending on them like a dove
Has taken all earthly sense of thought away but love.

34.

All sweet, all sacred, all heroic things,
All generous names and loyal, and all wise,
With all his heart in all its wayfarings
He sought, and worshipped, seeing them with his eyes
In very present glory, clothed with wings
Of words and deeds and dreams immortal rise
Visible more than living slaves and kings
Audible more than actual vows and lies

These, with scorn's fieriest rod,
These and the Lord their God,
The Lord their likeness, tyrant of the skies
As they Lord Gods of earth,
These with a rage of mirth
He mocked and scourged and spat on, in such wise
That none might stand before his rod,
And these being slain the Spirit alone be lord or God.

35.

For of all souls for all time glorious none
Loved Freedom better, of all who have loved her best,
Than he who wrote that scripture of the sun
Writ as with fire and light on heaven's own crest,
Of all words heard on earth the noblest one
That ever spake for souls and left them blest:
GLADLY WE SHOULD REST EVER, HAD WE WON
FREEDOM: WE HAVE LOST, AND VERY GLADLY REST.
O poet hero, lord
And father, we record
Deep in the burning tablets of the breast
Thankfully those divine
And living words of thine
For faith and comfort in our hearts imprest
With strokes engraven past hurt of years
And lines inured with fire of immemorial tears.

36.

But who being less than thou shall sing of thee
Words worthy of more than pity or less than scorn?
Who sing the golden garland woven of three,
Thy daughters, Graces mightier than the morn,
More godlike than the graven gods men see
Made all but immortal, human born
And heavenly natured? With the first came He,
Led by the living hand, who left forlorn
Life by his death, and time
More by his life sublime
Than by the lives of all whom all men mourn,
And even for mourning praise
Heaven, as for all those days
These dead men's lives clothed round with glories worn
By memory till all time lie dead,
And higher than all behold the bay round Shakespeare's head.

37.

Then, fairer than the fairest Grace of ours,
Came girt with Grecian gold the second Grace,
And verier daughter of his most perfect hours
Than any of latter time or alien place
Named, or with hair inwoven of English flowers
Only, nor wearing on her statelier face
The lordlier light of Athens. All the Powers
That graced and guarded round that holiest race,
That heavenliest and most high
Time hath seen live and die,
Poured all their power upon him to retrace
The erased immortal roll
Of Love's most sovereign scroll
And Wisdom's warm from Freedom's wide embrace,
The scroll that on Aspasia's knees
Laid once made manifest the Olympian Pericles.

38.

Clothed on with tenderest weft of Tuscan air,
Came laughing like Etrurian spring the third,
With green Valdelsa's hill-flowers in her hair
Deep-drenched with May-dews, in her voice the bird
Whose voice hath night and morning in it; fair
As the ambient gold of wall-flowers that engird
The walls engirdling with a circling stair
My sweet San Gimignano: nor a word
Fell from her flowerlike mouth
Not sweet with all the south;
As though the dust shrined in Certaldo stirred
And spake, as o'er it shone
That bright Pentameron,
And his own vines again and chestnuts heard
Boccaccio: nor swift Elsa's chime
Mixed not her golden babble with Petrarca's rhyme.

39.

No lovelier laughed the garden which receives
Yet, and yet hides not from our following eyes
With soft rose-laurels and strawberry-leaves,
Ternissa, sweet as April-colored skies,
Bowed like a flowering reed when May's wind heaves
The reed-bed that the stream kisses and sighs,
In love that shrinks and murmurs and believes
What yet the wisest of the starriest wise
Whom Greeee might ever hear
Speaks in the gentlest ear
That ever heard love's lips philosophize
With such deep reasoning words
As blossoms use and birds,
Nor heeds Leontion lingering till they rise
Far off, in no wise over far,
Beneath a heaven all amorous of its first-born star.

40.

What sound, what storm and splendour of what fire,
Darkening the light of heaven, lightening the night,
Rings, rages, flashes round what ravening pyre
That makes time's face pale with its reflex light
And leaves on earth, who seeing might scarce respire,
A shadow of red remembrance? Right nor might
Alternating wore ever shapes more dire
Nor manifest in all men's awful sight
In form and face that wore
Heaven's light and likeness more
Than these, or held suspense men's hearts at height
More fearful, since man first
Slaked with man's blood his thirst,
Than when Rome clashed with Hannibal in fight,
Till tower on ruining tower was hurled
Where Scipio stood, and Carthage was not in the world.

41.

Nor lacked there power of purpose in his hand
Who carved their several praise in words o. gold
To bare the brows of conquerors and to brand,
Made shelterless of laurels bought and sold
For price of blood or incense, dust or sand,
Triumph or terror. He that sought of old
His father Ammon in a stranger's land,
And shrank before the serpentining fold,
Stood in our seer's wide eye
No higher than man most high,
And lowest in heart when highest in hope t hold
Fast as a scripture furled
The scroll of all the world
Sealed with his signet: nor the blind and bold
First thief of empire, round whose head
Swarmed carrion flies for bees, on flesh for violets fed.*

42.

As fire that kisses, killing with a kiss,
He saw the light of death, riotous and red,
Flame round the bent brows of Semiramis
Re-risen, and mightier, from the Assyrian dead,
Kindling, as dawn a frost-bound precipice,
The steady snows of Russia, for the tread
Of feet that felt before them crawl and hiss
The snaky lines of blood violently shed
Like living creeping things
That writhe but have no stings
To scare adulterers from the imperial bed
Bowed with its load of lust,
Or chill the ravenous gust
That made her body a fire from heel to head;
Or change her high bright spirit and clear.
For all its mortal stains, from taint of fraud or fear.

43.

As light that blesses, hallowing with a look,
He saw the godhead in Vittoria's face
Shine soft on Buonarroti's, till he took,
Albeit himself God, a more godlike grace,
A strength more heavenly to confront and brook
All ill things coiled about his worldy race,
From the bright scripture of that present book

* Thy lifelong works, Napoleon, who shall write?
Time, in his children's blood who takes delight.
From the Greek of Landor

Wherein his tired grand eyes got power to trace
Comfort more sweet than youth,
And hope whose child was truth,
And love that brought forth sorrow for a space,
Only that she might bear
Joy: these things, written there,
Made even his soul's high heaven a heaven-lier place,
Perused with eyes whose glory and glow
Had in their fires the spirit of Michael Angelo.

44.

With balms and dews of blessing he consoled
The fair fame wounded by the black priest's fang,
Giovanna's, and washed off her blithe and bold
Boy-bridegroom's blood, that seemed so long to hang
On her fair hand, even till the stain of old
Was cleansed with healing song, that after sang
Sharp truth by sweetest singers' lips untold
Of pale Beatrice, though her death-note rang
From other strings divine
Ere his rekindling line
With yet more piteous and intolerant pang
Pierced all men's hearts anew
That heard her passion through
Till fierce from throes of fiery pity sprang
Wrath, armed for chase of monstrous beasts,
Strong to lay waste the kingdom of the seed of priests.

45.

He knew the high-souled humbleness, the mirth
And majesty of meanest men born free,
That made with Luther's or with Hofer's birth
The whole world worthier of the sun to see:
The wealth of spirit among the snows, the dearth
Wherein souls festered by the servile sea
That saw the lowest of even crowned heads on earth
Thronged round with worship in Parthenope.
His hand bade Justice guide
Her child Tyrannicide,
Light winged by fire that brings the dawn to be;
And pierced with Tyrrel's dart
Again the riotous heart
That mocked at mercy's tongue and manhood's knee:
And oped the cell where kinglike death
Hung o'er her brows discrowned who bare Elizabeth.

46.

Toward Spenser or toward Bacon proud or kind
He bared the heart of Essex, twain and one.
For the base heart that soiled the starry mind
Stern, for the father in his child undone
Soft as his own toward children, stamped and signed
With their sweet image visibly set on
As by God's hand, clear as his own designed
The likeness radiant out of ages gone
That none may now destroy
Of that high Roman boy
Whom Julius and Cleopatra saw their son
True-born of sovereign seed,
Foredoomed even thence to bleed,
The stately grace of bright Cæsarion,
The head unbent, the heart unbowed,
That not the shadow of death could make less clear and proud.

47.

With gracious gods he communed, honoring thus
At once by service and similitude,
Service devout and worship emulous
Of the same golden Muses once they wooed.
The names and shades adored of all of us,
The nurslings of the brave world's earlier brood,
Grown gods for us themselves: Theocritus
First, and more dear Catullus, names bedewed
With blessings bright like tears
From the old memorial years,
And loves and lovely laughters, every mood
Sweet as the drops that fell
Of their own œnomel
From living lips to cheer the multitude
That feeds on words divine, and grows
More worthy, seeing their world reblossom like a rose.

48.

Peace, the soft seal of long life's closing story,
The silent music that no strange note jars,
Crowned not with gentler hand the years that glory
Crowned, but could hide not all the spiritual scars
Time writes on the inward strengths of warriors hoary
With much long warfare, and with gradual bars
Blindly pent in : but these, being transitory,
Broke, and the power came back that passion mars :
And at the lovely last
Above all anguish past
Before his own the sightless eyes like stars
Arose that watched arise
Like stars in other skies
Above the strife of ships and hurtling cars
The Dioscurian songs divine
That lighten all the world with lightning of their line.

49.

He sang the last of Homer, having sung
The last of his Ulysses. Bright and wide
For him time's dark strait ways, like clouds that clung
About the day-star, doubtful to divide,
Waxed in his spiritual eyeshot, and his tongue
Spake as his soul bore witness, that descried,
Like those twin towering lights in darkness hung,
Homer, and grey Laertes at his side
Kingly as kings are none
Beneath a later sun,
And the sweet maiden ministering in pride
To sovereign and to sage
In their more sweet old age :
These things he sang, himself as old, and died.
And if death be not, if life be,
As Homer and as Milton are in heaven is he.

50.

Poet whose large-eyed loyalty of love
Was pure toward all high poets, all their kind
And all bright words and all sweet works thereof;
Strong like the sun, and like the sunlight kind ;
Heart that no fear but every grief might move
Wherewith men's hearts were bound or powers that bind ;
The purest soul that ever proof could prove
From taint of tortuous or of envious mind :
Whose eyes elate and clear
Nor shame nor ever fear
But only pity or glorious wrath could blind ;
Name set for love apart,
Held lifelong in my heart,
Face like a father's toward my face inclined :
No gift like thine are mine to give,
Who by thine own words only bid thee hail and live.

OFF SHORE.

When the might of the summer
Is most on the sea ;
When the days overcome her
With joy but to be,
With rapture of royal enchantment, and sorcery that sets her not free,

But for hours upon hours
As a thrall she remains
Spell-bound as with flowers
And content in their chains,
And her loud steeds fret not, and lift not lock of their deep white manes ;

Then only, far under
In the depths of her hold,
Some gleam of its wonder
Man's eye may behold,
Its wild weed forests of crimson and russet and olive and gold.

Still deeper and dimmer
And goodlier they glow
For the eyes of the swimmer
Who scans them below
As he crosses the zone of their flowerage that knows not of sunshine and snow.

Soft blossomless frondage
And foliage that gleams
As to prisoners in bondage
The light of their dreams,
The desire of a dawn unbeholden, with hope on the wings of its beams.

Not as prisoners entombed
Waxen haggard and wizen,
But consoled and illumed
In the depths of their prison
With delight of the light everlasting and vision of dawn on them risen,

From the banks and the beds
Of the waters divine
They lift up their heads
And the flowers of them shine
Through the splendor of darkness that clothes them of water that glimmers like wine.

Bright bank over bank
Making glorious the gloom,
Soft rank upon rank,
Strange bloom after bloom,
They kindle the liquid low twilight, and dusk of the dim sea's womb.

Through the subtle and tangible
Gloom without form,
Their branches, infrangible
Ever of storm
Spread softer their sprays than the shoots of the woodland when April is warm.

As the flight of the thunder, full
Charged with its word,
Dividing the wonderful
Depths like a bird,
Speaks wrath and delight to the heart of the night that exults to have heard,

So swiftly, though soundless
In silence's ear,
Light, winged from the boundless
Blue depths full of cheer,
Speaks joy to the heart of the waters that part not before him, but hear.

Light, perfect and visible
Godhead of God,
God indivisible,
Lifts but his rod,
And the shadows are scattered in sunder, and darkness is light at his nod.

At the touch of his wand,
At the nod of his head
From the spaces beyond
Where the dawn hath her bed,
Earth, water, and air are transfigured, and rise as one risen from the dead.

He puts forth his hand,
And the mountains are thrilled
To the heart as they stand
In his presence, fulfilled
With his glory that utters his grace upon earth, and her sorrows are stilled.

The moan of her travail
That groans for the light
Till day spring unravel
The weft of the night,
At the sound of the strings of the music of morning, falls dumb with delight.

He gives forth his word,
And the word that he saith,
Ere well it be heard,
Strikes darkness to death;
For the thought of his heart is the sunrise, and dawn as the sound of his breath.

And the strength of its pulses
That passion makes proud
Confounds and convulses
The depths of the cloud
Of the darkness that heaven was engirt with, divided and rent as a shroud,

As the veil of the shrine
Of the temple of old
When darkness divine
Over noonday was rolled;
So the heart of the night by the pulse of the light is convulsed and controlled.

And the sea's heart, groaning
For glories withdrawn,
And the waves' mouths, moaning
All night for the dawn,
Are uplift as the hearts and the mouths of the singers on leaside and lawn.

And the sound of the quiring
Of all these as one,
Desired and desiring
Till dawn's will be done,
Fills full with delight of them heaven till it burns as the heart of the sun.

Till the waves too inherit
And waters take part
In the sense of the spirit
That breathes from his heart,
And are kindled with music as fire when the lips of the morning part,

With music unheard
In the light of her lips,
In the life-giving word
Of the dewfall that drips
On the grasses of earth, and the wind that enkindles the wings of the ships.

White glories of wings
As of seafaring birds
That flock from the springs
Of the sunrise in herds
With the wind for a herdsman, and hasten or halt at the change of his words.

As the watchword's change
When the wind's note shifts,
And the skies grow strange,
And the white squall drifts
Up sharp from the sea-line, vexing the sea till the low cloud lifts.

At the charge of his word
Bidding pause, bidding haste,
When the ranks are stirred
And the lines displaced,
They scatter as wild swans parting adrift on the wan green waste.

At the hush of his word
In a pause of his breath
When the waters have heard
His will that he saith,
They stand as a flock penned close in its fold for division of death.

As a flock by division
Of death to be thinned,
As the shades in a vision
Of spirits that sinned;
So glimmer their shrouds and their sheetings as clouds on the stream of the wind.

But the sun stands fast,
And the sea burns bright,
And the flight of them past
Is no more than the flight
Of the snow-soft swarm of serene wings poised and afloat in the light.

Like flowers upon flowers
In a festival way
When hours after hours
Shed grace on the day,
White blossom-like butterflies hover and gleam through the snows of the spray.

Like snow colored petals
Of blossoms that flee
From storm that unsettles
The flower as the tree
They flutter, a legion of flowers on the wing, through the field of the sea.

Through the furrowless field
Where the foam-blossoms blow
And the secrets are sealed
Of their harvest below
They float in the path of the sunbeams, as flakes or as blossoms of snow.

Till the sea's ways darken,
And the God, withdrawn,
Give ear not or hearken
If prayer on him fawn,
And the sun's self seem but a shadow, the noon as a ghost of the dawn.

No shadow, but rather
God, father of song,
Shew grace to me, Father
God, loved of me long,
That I lose not the light of thy face, that my trust in thee work me not wrong.

While yet I make forward
With face toward thee
Not turned yet in shoreward,
Be thine upon me;
Be thy light on my forehead or ever I turn it again from the sea.

As a kiss on my brow
Be the light of thy grace,
Be thy glance on me now
From the pride of thy place:
As the sign of a sire to a son be the light on my face of thy face.

Thou wast father of olden
Times hailed and adored,
And the sense of thy golden
Great harp's monochord
Was the joy in the soul of the singers that hailed thee for master and lord.

Fair father of all
In thy ways that have trod,
That have risen at thy call,
That have thrilled at thy nod,
Arise, shine, lighten upon me, O sun that we see to be God.

As my soul has been dutiful
Only to thee,
O God most beautiful,
Lighten thou me,
As I swim through the dim long rollers, with eyelids uplift from the sea.

Be praised and adored of us
All in accord,
Father and lord of us
Alway adored,
The slayer and the stayer and the harper, the light of us all and our lord.

At the sound of thy lyre,
At the touch of thy rod,
Air quickens to fire
By the foot of thee trod,
The saviour and healer and singer, the living and visible God.

The years are before thee
As shadows of thee,
As men that adore thee,
As cloudlets that flee :
But thou art the God, and thy kingdom is heaven, and thy shrine is the sea.

AFTER NINE YEARS.

TO JOSEPH MAZZINI.

Prima dicte mihi, Summâ dicende Camenâ.

1.

THE shadows fallen of years are nine
Since heaven grew seven times more divine
With thy soul entering, and the dearth
Of soul on earth
Grew sevenfold sadder, wanting One
Whose light of life, quenched here and done,
Burns there eternal as the sun.

2.

Beyond all word, beyond all deed,
Beyond all thought beloved, what need
Hast death or love that speech should be,
Hast thou of me?
I had no word, no prayer, no cry,
To praise or hail or mourn thee by,
As when thou too wast man as I.

3.

Nay, never, nor as any born
Save one whose name priests turn to scorn,
Who haply, though we know not now,
Was man as thou,
A wanderer branded with men's blame,
Loved past man's utterance : yea, the same,
Perchance, and as his name thy name.

4.

Thou was as very Christ—not he
Degraded into Deity,
And priest-polluted by such prayer
As poisons air,
Tongue-worship of the tongue that slays,
False faith and parricidal praise :
But the man crowned with suffering days

5.

God only, being of all mankind
Most manlike, of most equal mind
And heart most perfect, more than can
Be heart of man
Once in ten ages, born to be
As haply Christ was, and as we
Knew surely, seeing, and worshipped thee.

6.

To know thee—this at least was ours,
God, clothed upon with human hours,
O face beloved, O spirit adored,
Saviour and lord!
That was not only for thine own
Redeemer—not of these alone
But all to whom thy word was known.

7.

Ten years have wrought their will with me
Since last my words took wing for thee
Who then was even as now above
Me, and my love.
As then thou knewest not scorn, so now
With that beloved benignant brow
Take these of him whose light was thou.

FOR A PORTRAIT OF FELICE ORSINI.

STEADFAST as sorrow, fiery sad, and sweet
With underthoughts of love and faith, more strong
Than doubt and hate and all ill thoughts which throng,
Haply, round hope's or fear's world-wandering feet
That find no rest from wandering till they meet
Death, bearing palms in hand and crowns of song;
His face, who thought to vanquish wrong with wrong,
Erring, and make rage and redemption meet,
Havoc and freedom; weaving in one weft
Good with his right hand, evil with his left;
But all a hero lived and erred and died;
Looked thus upon the living world he left
So bravely that with pity less than pride
Men hail him Patriot and Tyrannicide.

EVENING ON THE BROADS.

OVER two shadowless waters, adrift as a pinnace in peril,
Hangs as in heavy suspense, charged with irresolute light,
Softly the soul of the sunset upholden awhile on the sterile
Waves and wastes of the land, half repossessed by the night.
Inland glimmer the shallows asleep and afar in the breathless
Twilight: yonder the depths darken afar and asleep.
Slowly the semblance of death out of heaven descends on the deathless
Waters: hardly the light lives on the face of the deep—
Hardly, but here for awhile. All over the grey soft shallow
Hover the colors and clouds of twilight, void of a star.

As a bird unfledged is the broad-winged night, whose winglets are callow
Yet, but soon with their plumes will she cover her brood from afar,
Cover the brood of her worlds that cumber the skies with their blossom
Thick as the darkness of leaf-shadowed spring is encumbered with flowers.
World upon world is enwound in the bountiful girth of her bosom,
Warm and lustrous with life lovely to look on as ours.
Still is the sunset adrift as a spirit in doubt that dissembles
Still with itself, being sick of division and dimmed by dismay—
Nay, not so; but with love and delight beyond passion it trembles,
Fearful and fain of the night, lovely with love of the day:
Fain and fearful of rest that is like unto death, and begotten
Out of the womb of the tomb, born of the seed of the grave:
Lovely with shadows of loves that are only not wholly forgotten,
Only not wholly suppressed by the dark as a wreck by the wave.
Still there linger the loves of the morning and noon, in a vision
Blindly beheld, but in vain: ghosts that are tired, and would rest.
But the glories beloved of the night rise all too dense for division,
Deep in the depth of her breast sheltered as doves in a nest.
Fainter the beams of the loves of the daylight season enkindled
Wane, and the memories of hours that were fair with the love of them fade:
Loftier, aloft of the lights of the sunset stricken and dwindled,
Gather the signs of the love at the heart of the night new-made.
New-made night, new-born of the sunset, immeasurable, endless,
Opens the secret of love hid from of old in her heart,
In the deep sweet heart full-charged with faultless love of the friendless
Spirits of men that are eased when the wheels of the sun depart.
Still is the sunset afloat as a ship on the waters upholden,
Full-sailed, wide-winged, poised softly forever asway—
Nay, not so, but at least for a little, awhile at the golden
Limit of arching air fain for an hour to delay.
Here on the bar of the sand-bank, steep yet aslope to the gleaming
Waste of the water without, waste of the water within,
Lights overhead and lights underneath seem doubtfully dreaming
Whether the day be done, whether the night may begin.
Far and afar and farther again they falter and hover,
Warm on the water and deep in the sky and pale on the cloud:
Colder again and slowly remoter, afraid to recover
Breath, yet fain to revive, as it seems, from the skirt of the shroud.
Faintly the heartbeats shorten and pause of the light in in the westward
Heaven, as eastward quicken the paces of star upon star
Hurried and eager of life as a child that strains to the breast-ward
Eagerly, yearning forth of the deeps where the ways of them are,
Glad of the glory of the gift of their life and the wealth of its wonder,
Fain of the night and the sea and the sweet wan face of the earth.
Over them air grows deeper, intense with delight in them: under
Things are thrilled in their sleep as with sense of a sure new birth.
But here by the sand-bank watching, with eyes on the sea-line, stranger
Grows to me also the weight of the sea-ridge gazed on of me,
Heavily heaped up, changefully changeless, void though of danger
Void not of menace, but full of the might of the dense dull sea.
Like as the wave is before me, behind is the bank deep-drifted;
Yellow and thick as the bank is behind me in front is the wave.
As the wall of a prison imprisoning the mere is the girth of it lifted:
But the rampire of water in front is erect as the wall of a grave.
And the crests of it crumble and topple and change, but the wall is not broken:
Standing still dry-shod, I see it as higher than my head,

Moving inland alway again, reared up as in token
Still of impending wrath still in the foam of it shed.
And even in the pauses between them, dividing the rollers in sunder,
High overhead seems ever the sea-line fixed as a mark,
And the shore where I stand as a valley beholden of hills whence thunder
Cloud and torrent and storm, darkening the depths of the dark.
Up to the sea, not upon it or over it, upward from under
Seems he to gaze, whose eyes yearn after it here from the shore :
A wall of turbid water, aslope to the wide sky's wonder
Of color and cloud, it climbs, or spreads as a slanted floor.
And the large lights change on the face of the mere like things that were living,
Winged and wonderful, beams like as birds are that pass and are free :
But the light is dense as darkness, a gift withheld in the giving,
That lies as dead on the fierce dull face of the landward sea.
Stained and stifled and soiled, made earthier than earth is and duller,
Grimly she puts back light as rejected, a thing put away :
No transparent rapture, a molten music of color :
No translucent love taken and given of the day.
Fettered and marred and begrimed is the light's live self on her falling,
As the light of a man's life lighted the fume of a dungeon mars :
Only she knows of the wind, when her wrath gives ear to him calling ;
The delight of the light she knows not, nor answers the sun or the stars.
Love she hath none to return for the luminous love of their giving :
None to reflect from the bitter and shallow response of her heart.
Yearly she feeds on her dead, yet herself seems dead and not living,
Or confused as a soul heavy-laden with trouble that will not depart.
In the sound of her speech to the darkness the moan of her evil remorse is,
Haply, for strong ships gnawed by the dog-toothed sea-bank's fang
And trampled to death by the rage of the feet of her foam-lipped horses
Whose manes are yellow as plague, and as ensigns of pestilence hang,
That wave in the foul faint air of the breath of a death-stricken city ;
So menacing heaves she the manes of her rollers knotted with sand,
Discolored, opaque, suspended in sign as of strength without pity,
That shake with flameless thunder the low long length of the strand.
Here, far off in the farther extreme of the shore as it lengthens
Northward, lonely for miles, ere ever a village begin,
On the lapsing land that recedes as the growth of the strong sea strengthens
Shoreward, thrusting further and further its outworks in,
Here in Shakespeare's vision, a flower of her kin forsaken,
Lay in her golden raiment alone on the wild wave's edge,
Surely by no shore else, but here on the bank storm-shaken,
Perdita, bright as a dew-drop engilt of the sun on the sedge.
Here on a shore unbeheld of his eyes in a dream he beheld her
Outcast, fair as a fairy, the child of a far-off king :
And over the babe-flower gently the head of a pastoral elder
Bowed, compassionate, hoar as the hawthorn-blossom in spring,
And kind as harvest in autumn : a shelter of shade on the lonely
Shelterless unknown shore scourged of implacable waves :
Here, where the wind walks royal, alone in his kingdom, and only
Sounds to the sedges a wail as of triumph that conquers and craves.
All these waters and wastes are his empire of old, and awaken
From barren and stagnant slumber at only the sound of his breath :
Yet the hunger is eased not that aches in his heart, nor the goal overtaken
That his wide wings yearn for and labor as hearts that yearn after death.
All the solitude sighs and expects with a blind expectation
Somewhat unknown of its own sad heart, grown heart-sick of strife :

Till sometime its wild heart maddens, and moans, and the vast ululation
Takes wing with the clouds on the waters, and wails to be quit of its life.
For the spirit and soul of the waste is the wind, and his wings with their waving
Darken and lighten the darkness and light of it thickened or thinned,
But the heart that impels them is even as a conqueror's insatiably craving
That victory can fill not, as power cannot satiate the want of the wind.
All these moorlands and marshes are full of his might, and oppose not
Aught of defence nor of barrier, of forest or precipice piled :
But the will of the wind works ever as his that desires what he knows not,
And the wail of his want unfulfilled is as one making moan for her child.
And the cry of his triumph is even as the crying of hunger that maddens
The heart of a strong man aching in vain as the wind's heart aches :
And the sadness itself of the land for its infinite solitude saddens
More for the sound than the silence athirst for the sound that slakes.
And the sunset at last and the twilight are dead : and the darkness is breathless
With fear of the wind's breath rising that seems and seems not to sleep :
But a sense of the sound of it alway, a spirit unsleeping and deathless,
Ghost or God, evermore moves on the face of the deep.

THE EMPEROR'S PROGRESS.

A STUDY IN THREE STAGES.

(On the Busts of Nero in the Uffizj.)

I.

A CHILD of brighter than the morning's birth
And lovelier than all smiles that may be smiled
Save only of little children undefiled,
Sweet, perfect, witless of their own dear worth,
Live rose of love, mute melody of mirth,
Glad as a bird is when the woods are mild,
Adorable as is nothing save a child,
Hails with wide eyes and lips his life on earth,
His lovely life with all its heaven to be.
And whoso reads the name inscribed or hears
Feels his own heart a frozen well of tears,
Child, for deep dread and fearful pity of thee
Whom God would not let rather die than see
The incumbent horror of impending years.

II.

Man, that wast godlike being a child, and now,
No less than kinglike, art no more in sooth
For all thy grace and lordliness of youth,
The crown that bids men's branded foreheads bow
Much more has branded and bowed down thy brow
And gnawn upon it as with fire or tooth
Of steel or snake so sorely, that the truth
Seems here to bear false witness. Is it thou,
Child ? and is all the summer of all thy spring
This ? are the smiles that drew men's kisses down
All faded and transfigured to the frown
That grieves thy face ? Art thou this weary thing ?
Then is no slave's load heavier than a crown
And such a thrall no bondman as a king.

III.

Misery, beyond all men's most miserable,
Absolute, whole, defiant of defence,
Inevitable, inexplacable, intense,
More vast than heaven is high, more deep than hell.
Past cure or charm of solace or of spell,

Possesses and pervades the spirit and sense
Whereto the expanse of the earth pays tribute ; whence
Breeds evil only, and broods on fumes that swell
Rank from the blood of brother and mother and wife.

"Misery of miseries, all is misery," saith
The heavy fair-faced hateful head, at strife
With its own lusts that burn with feverous breath
Lips which the loathsome bitterness of life
Leaves fearful of the bitterness of death.

THE RESURRECTION OF ALCILIA.

(Gratefully inscribed to Dr. A. B. Grosart.)

SWEET song-flower of the Mayspring of our song,
Be welcome to us, with loving thanks and praise
To his good hand who travelling on strange ways
Found thee forlorn and fragrant, lain along
Beneath dead leaves that many a winter's wrong
Had rained and heaped through nigh three centuries' maze

Above thy Maybloom, hiding from our gaze
The life that in thy leaves lay sweet and strong.
For thine have life, while many above thine head
Piled by the wind lie blossomless and dead.
So now disburdened of such load above
That lay as death's own dust upon thee shed
By days too deaf to hear thee like a dove
Murmuring, we hear thee, bird and flower of love.

THE FOURTEENTH OF JULY.

(On the refusal by the French Senate of the plenary amnesty demanded by Victor Hugo, in his speech of July 3rd, for the surviving exiles of the Commune.)

THOU shouldst have risen as never dawn yet rose,
Day of the sunrise of the soul of France,
Dawn of the whole world's morning, when the trance
Of all the world had end, and all its woes
Respite, prophetic of their perfect close.
Light of all tribes of men, all names and clans,
Dawn of the whole world's morning and of man's,

Flower of the heart of morning's mystic rose
Dawn of the very dawn of very day,
When the sun brighter breaks night's ruinous prison,
Thou shouldst have risen as yet no dawn has risen,
Evoked of him whose word puts night away.
Our father, at the music of whose word
Exile had ended, and the world had heard.

July 5, 1880.

THE LAUNCH OF THE LIVADIA.

I.

Gold, and fair marbles, and again more gold,
And space of halls afloat that glance and gleam
Like the green heights of sunset heaven, or seem
The golden steeps of sunrise red and cold
On deserts where dark exile keeps the fold
Fast of the flocks of torment, where no beam
Falls of kind light or comfort save in dream,
These we far off behold not, who behold
The cordage woven of curses, and the decks
With mortal hate and mortal peril paven;
From stem to stern the lines of doom engraven
That mark for sure inevitable wrecks
Those sails predestinate, though no storm vex,
To miss on earth and find in hell their haven.

II.

All curses be about her, and all ill
Go with her; heaven be dark above her way,
The gulf beneath her glad and sure of prey,
And, wheresoe'er her prow be pointed, still
The winds of heaven have all one evil will
Conspirant even as hearts of kings to slay
With mouths of kings to lie and smile and pray,
And chiefliest his whose wintrier breath makes chill
With more than winter's and more poisonous cold
The horror of his kingdom toward the north,
The deserts of his kingdom toward the east.
And though death hide not in her direful hold
Be all stars adverse toward her that come forth
Nightly, by day all hours till all have ceased:

III.

Till all have ceased for ever, and the sum
Be summed of all the sumless curses told
Out on his head by all dark seasons rolled
Over its cursed and crowned existence, dumb
And blind and stark as though the snows made numb
All sense within it, and all conscience cold,
That hangs round hearts of less imperial mold
Like a snake feeding till their doomday come.
O heart fast bound of frozen poison, be
All nature's as all true men's hearts to thee,
A two-edged sword of judgment; hope be far
And fear at hand for pilot oversea
With death for compass and despair for star.
And the white foam a shroud for the White Czar.

September 30, 1880.

SIX YEARS OLD.

To H. W. M.

Between the springs of six and seven,
Two fresh years' fountains, clear
Of all but golden sand for leaven,
Child, midway passing here,
As earth for love's sake dares bless heaven,
So dare I bless you, dear.

Between two bright well-heads, that brighten
With every breath that blows
Too loud to lull, too low to frighten,
But fain to rock, the rose,
Your feet stand fast, your lit smiles lighten,
That might rear flowers from snows.

You came when winds unleashed were snarling
  Behind the frost-bound hours,
A snow-bird sturdier than the starling,
  A storm-bird fledged for showers,
That spring might smile to find you, darling,
  First born of all the flowers.

Could love make worthy things of worthless,
  My song were worth an ear:
Its note should make the days most mirthless
  The merriest of the year,
And wake to birth all buds yet birthless
  To keep your birthday, dear.

But where your birthday brightens heaven
  No need has earth, God knows,
Of light or warmth to melt or leaven
  The frost or fog that glows
With sevenfold heavenly lights of seven
Sweet springs that cleave the snows.

Could love make worthy music of you,
  And match my Master's powers,
Had even my love less heart to love you,
  A better song were ours;
With all the rhymes like stars above you,
  And all the words like flowers.

September 30, 1880.

A PARTING SONG.

(To a friend leaving England for a year's residence in Australia.)

THESE winds and suns of spring
  That warm with breath and wing
The trembling sleep of earth, till half awake
She laughs and blushes ere her slumber break,
  For all good gifts they bring
  Require one better thing,
For all the loans of joy they lend us, borrow
One sharper dole of sorrow,
To sunder soon by half a world of sea
Her son from England and my friend from me.

  Nor hope nor love nor fear
  May speed or stay one year,
Nor song nor prayer may bid, as mine would fain,
The seasons perish and be born again,
  Restoring all we lend,
  Reluctant, of a friend,
The voice, the hand, the presence and the sight
That lend their life and light
To present gladness and heart-strengthening cheer,
Now lent again for one reluctant year.

  So much we lend indeed,
  Perforce, by force of need,
So much we must; even these things and no more
The far sea sundering and the sundered shore
  A world apart from ours,
  So much the imperious hours,
Exact and spare not; but no more than these
All earth and all her seas
From thought and faith of trust and truth can borrow,
Not memory from desire, nor hope from sorrow.

  Through bright and dark and bright
  Returns of day and night
I bid the swift year speed and change and give
His breath of life to make the next year live
  With sunnier suns for us
  A life more prosperous,
And laugh with flowers more fragrant, that shall see
A merrier March for me,
A rosier-girdled race of night with day,
A goodlier April and a tenderer May.
  For him the inverted year
  Shall mark our seasons here
With alien alternation, and revive
This withered winter, slaying the spring alive
  With darts more sharply drawn
  As nearer draws the dawn
In heaven transfigured over earth transformed
And with our winters warmed
And wasted with our summers, till the beams
Rise on his face that rose on Dante's dreams.

Till fourfold morning rise
Of starshine on his eyes,
Dawn of the spheres that brand steep heaven across
At height of night with semblance of a cross
Whose grace and ghostly glory
Poured heaven on purgatory
Seeing with their flamelets risen all heaven grow glad
For love thereof it had
And lovely joy of loving ; so may these
Make bright with welcome now their southern seas.

O happy stars, whose mirth
The saddest soul on earth [bless,
That ever soared and sang found strong to
Lightening his life's harsh load of heaviness
With comfort sown like seed
In dream though not in deed [vine,
On sprinkled wastes of darkling thought di-
Let all your lights now shine
With all as glorious gladness on his eyes
For whom in deed and not in dream they rise.

As those great twins of air
Hailed once with oldworld prayer
Of all folk alway faring forth by sea,
So now may these for grace and guidance be,
To guard his sail and bring
Again to brighten spring
The face we look for and the hand we lack
Still, till they light him back,
As welcome as to first discovering eyes
Their light rose ever, soon on his to rise.

As parting now he goes
From snow-time back to snows,
So back to spring from summer may next year
Restore him, and our hearts receive him here,
The best good gift that spring
Had ever grace to bring
At fortune's happiest hour of star-blest birth,
Back to love's homebright earth,
To eyes with eyes that commune, hand with hand,
And the old warm bosom of all our mother-land.

Earth and sea-wind and sea
And stars and sunlight be
Alike all prosperous for him, and all hours
Have all one heart, and all that heart as ours.
All things as good as strange
Crown all the season's change
With changing flower and compensating fruit
From one year's ripening root ;
Till next year brings us, roused at spring's recall,
A heartier flower and goodlier fruit than all.

March 26, 1880.

BY THE NORTH SEA.

"We are what suns and winds and waters make us."—LANDOR.

SEA, *wind and sun, with light and sound and breath*
The spirit of man fulfilling—these create
That joy wherewith man's life grown passionate
Gains heart to hear and sense to read and faith
To know the secret word our Mother saith
In silence, and to see, though doubt wax great
Death as the shadow cast by life on fate,
Passing, whose shade we call the shadow of death.

Brother, to whom our Mother as to me
Is dearer than all dreams of days undone,
This song I give you of the sovereign three
That are as life and sleep and death are, one :
A song the sea-wind gave me from the sea
Where naught of man's endures before the sun.

BY THE NORTH SEA.

I.

1.

A LAND that is lonelier than ruin ;
A sea that is stranger than death :
Far fields that a rose never blew in,
Wan waste where the winds lack breath ;
Waste endless and boundless and flowerless
But of marsh-blossoms fruitless as free :
Where earth lies exhausted, as powerless
To strive with the sea.

2.

Far flickers the flight of the swallows,
Far flutters the weft of the grass
Spun dense over desolate hollows
More pale than the clouds as they pass :
Thick woven as the weft of a witch is
Round the heart of a thrall that hath sinned,
Whose youth and the wrecks of its riches
Are waifs on the wind.

3.

The pastures are herdless and sheepless
No pasture or shelter for herds :
The wind is relentless and sleepless
And restless and songless the birds ;
Their cries from afar fall breathless,
Their wings are as lightnings that flee ;
For the land has two lords that are deathless :
Death's self, and the sea.

4.

These twain, as a king with his fellow,
Hold converse of desolate speech :
And her waters are haggard and yellow
And crass with the scurf of the beach :
And his garments are grey as the hoary
Wan sky where the day lies dim :
And his power is to her, and his glory,
As hers unto him.

5.

In the pride of his power she rejoices,
In her glory he glows and is glad :
In her darkness the sound of his voice is,
With his breath she dilates and is mad :
'If thou slay me, O death, and outlive me,
Yet thy love hath fulfilled me of thee.'
'Shall I give thee not back if thou give me,
O sister, O sea?'

6.

And year upon year dawns living,
And age upon age drops dead :
And his hand is not weary of giving,
And the thirst of her heart is not fed :
And the hunger that moans in her passion,
And the rage in her hunger that roars,
A a wolf's that the winter lays lash on,
Still calls and implores.

7.

Her walls have no granite for girder,
No fortalice fronting her stands:
But reefs the bloodguiltiest of murder
Are less than the banks of her sands:
These number their slain by the thousand;
For the ship hath no surety to be,
When the bank is abreast of her bows and
Aflush with the sea.

8.

No surety to stand, and no shelter
To dawn out of darkness but one,
Out of waters that hurtle and welter
No succor to dawn with the sun
But a rest from the wind as it passes,
Where, hardly redeemed from the waves,
Lie thick as the blades of the grasses
The dead in their graves.

9.

A multitude noteless of numbers,
As wild weeds cast on an heap :
And sounder than sleep are their slumbers,
And softer than song is their sleep ;
And sweeter than all things and stranger
The sense, if perchance it may be,
That the wind is divested of danger
And scatheless the sea.

10.

That the roar of the banks they breasted
Is hurtless as bellowing of herds,
And the strength of his wings that invested
The wind, as the strength of a bird's ;
As the sea-mew's might or the swallow's
That cry to him back if he cries,
As over the graves and their hollows
Days darken and rise.

11.

As the souls of the dead men disburdened
And clean of the sins that they sinned,
With a lovelier than man's life guerdoned
And delight as a wave's in the wind,
And delight as the wind's in the billow,
Birds pass, and deride with their glee
The flesh that has dust for its pillow
As wrecks have the sea.

12.

When the days of the sun wax dimmer,
Wings flash through the dusk like beams ;
As the clouds in the lit sky glimmer,
The bird in the graveyard gleams ;
As the cloud at its wing's edge whitens
When the clarions of sunrise are heard,
The graves that the bird's note brightens
Grow bright for the bird.

13.

As the waves of the numberless waters
That the wind cannot number who guides
Are ths sons of the shore and the daughters
Here lulled by the chime of the tides :
And here in the press of them standing
We know not if these or if we
Live truliest, or anchored to landing
Or drifted to sea.

14.

In the valley he named of decision
No denser were multitudes met
When the soul of the seer in her vision
Saw nations for doom of them set ;
Saw darkness in dawn, and the splendor
Of judgment, the sword and the rod ;
But the doom here of death is more tender
And gentler the god.

15.

And gentler the wind from the dreary
Sea-banks by the waves overlapped,
Being weary, speaks peace to the weary
From slopes that the tide-stream hath sapped ;
And sweeter than all that we call so
The seal of their slumber shall be
Till the graves that embosom them also
Be sapped of the sea.

II.

1.

For the heart of the waters is cruel,
And the kisses are dire of their lips,
And their waves are as fire is to fuel
To the strength of the sea-faring ships,
Though the sea's eye gleam as a jewel
To the sun's eye back as he dips.

2.

Though the sun's eye flash to the sea's
Live light of delight and of laughter,
And her lips breathe back to the breeze
The kiss that the wind's lips waft her
From the sun that subsides, and sees
No gleam of the storm's dawn after.

3.

And the wastes of the wild sea-marches
Where the borderers are matched in their might—
Bleak fens that the sun's weight parches,
Dense waves that reject his light—
Change under the change-colored arches
Of changeless morning and night.

4.

The waves are as ranks enrolled
Too close for the storm to sever:
The fens lie naked and cold,
But their heart fails utterly never:
The lists are set from of old,
And the warfare endureth for ever.

III.

1.

Miles, and miles, and miles of desolation!
Leagues on leagues on leagues without a change!
Sign or token of some eldest nation
Here would make the strange land not so strange.
Time-forgotten, yea since time's creation,
Seem these borders where the sea-birds range.

2.

Slowly, gladly, full of peace and wonder
Grows his heart who journeys here alone.
Earth and all its thoughts of earth sink under
Deep as deep in water sinks a stone.
Hardly knows it if the rollers thunder,
Hardly whence the lonely wind is blown.

3.

Tall the plumage of the rush-flower tosses,
Sharp and soft in many a curve and line
Gleam and glow the sea-colored marsh-mosses,
Salt and splendid from the circling brine.
Streak on streak of glimmering seashine crosses
All the land sea-saturate as with wine.

4.

Far, and far between, in divers orders,
Clear grey steeples cleave the low grey sky;
Fast and firm as time-unshaken warders,
Hearts made sure by faith, by hope made high.
These alone in all the wild sea-borders
Fear no blast of days and nights that die.

5.

All the land is like as one man's face is,
Pale and troubled still with change of cares
Doubt and death pervade her clouded spaces:
Strength and length of life and peace are theirs;
Theirs alone amid these weary places,
Seeing not how the wild world frets and fares.

6.

Firm and fast where all is cloud that changes
Cloud-clogged sunlight, cloud by sunlight thinned,
Stern and sweeet, above the sand-hill ranges
Watch the towers and tombs of men that sinned
Once, now calm as earth whose only change is
Wind, and light, and wind and cloud, and wind.

7.

Out and in and out the sharp straits wander,
In and out and in the wild way strives,
Starred and paved and lined with flowers that squander
Gold as golden as the gold of hives,
Salt and moist and multiform: but yonder,
See, what sign of life or death survives?

8.

Seen then only when the songs of olden
Harps where young whose echoes yet endure,
Hymned of Homer when his years were golden,
Known of only when the world was pure,
Here is Hades, manifest, beholden,
Surely, surely here, if aught be sure!

9.

Where the border-line was crossed, that, sundering
Death from life, keeps weariness from rest,
None can tell, who fares hereforward wondering;
None may doubt but here might end his quest.
Here life's lightning joys and woes once thundering
Sea-like round him cease like storm suppressed.

Here the wise wave-wandering steadfast-hearted
Guest of many a lord of many a land
Saw the shape or shade of years departed,
Saw the semblance risen and hard at hand,
Saw the mother long from love's reach parted,
Anticleia, like a statue stand.

11.

Statue? nay, nor tissued image woven
Fair on hangings in his father's hall;
Nay, too fast her faith of heart was proven,
Far too firm her loveliest love of all;
Love wherethrough the loving heart was cloven,
Love that hears not when the loud Fates call.

12.

Love that lives and stands up re-created
Then when life has ebbed and anguish fled;
Love more strong than death or all things fated,
Child's and mother's, lit by love and led;
Love that found what life so long awaited
Here, when life came down among the dead.

13.

Here, where never came alive another,
Came her sod across the sundering tide
Crossed before by many a warrior brother
Once that warred on Ilion at his side;
Here spread forth vain hands to clasp the mother
Dead, that sorrowing for his love's sake died.

14.

Parted, though by narrowest of divisions,
Clasp he might not, only might implore.
Sundered yet by bitterest of derisions,
Son, and mother from the son she bore—
Here? But all dispeopled here of visions
Lies, forlorn of shadows even, the shore.

15.

All too sweet such men's Hellenic speech is
All too fain they lived of light to see,
Once to see the darkness of these beaches,
Once to sing this Hades found of me
Ghostless, all its gulfs and creeks and reaches,
Sky, and shore, and cloud, and waste, and sea.

IV.

1.

But aloft and afront of me faring
Far forward as folk in a dream
That strive, between doubting and daring,
Right on till the goal for them gleam,
Full forth till their goal on them lighten,
The harbor where fain they would be,
What headlands there darken and brighten?
What change in the sea?

2.

What houses and woodlands that nestle
Save inland to lee of the hill
As it slopes from the headlands that wrestle
And succumb to the strong sea's will?
Truce is not, nor respite, nor pity,
For the battle is waged not of hands
Where over the grave of a city
The ghost of it stands.

3.

Where the wings of the sea-wind slacken,
Green lawns to the landward thrive,
Fields brighten and pine-woods blacken,
And the heat in their heart is alive;
They blossom and warble and murmur,
For the sense of their spirit is free:
But harder to shoreward and firmer
The grasp of the sea.

4.

Like ashes the low cliffs crumble,
The banks drop down into dust,
The heights of the hills are made humble,
As a reed's is the strength of their trust:
As a city's that armies environ,
The strength of their stay is of sand:
But the grasp of the sea is as iron,
Laid hard on the land.

5.

A land that is thirstier than ruin:
A sea that is hungrier than death;
Heaped hills that a tree never grew in;
Wide sands where the wave draws breath;
All solace is here for the spirit
That ever for ever may be
For the soul of thy son to inherit
My mother, my sea.

6.

O delight of the headlands and beaches!
O desire of the wind on the wold,
More glad than a man's when it reaches
That end which it sought from of old
And the palm of possession is dreary
To the sense that in search of it sinned;
But nor satisfied ever nor weary
Is ever the wind.

7.

The delight that he takes but in living
Is more than of all things that live:
For the world that has all things for giving
Has nothing so goodly to give:
But more than delight his desire is,
For the goal where his pinions would be
Is immortal as air or as fire is,
Immense as the sea.

8.

Though hence come the moan that he borrows
From darkness and depth of the night,
Though hence be the spring of his sorrows,
Hence too is the joy of his might;
The delight that his doom is for ever
To seek and desire and rejoice,
And the sense that eternity never
Shall silence his voice.

9.

That satiety never may stifle
Nor weariness ever estrange
Nor time be so strong as to rifle
Nor change be so great as to change
His gift that renews in the giving,
The joy that exalts him to be
Alone of all elements living
The lord of the sea.

10.

What is fire, that its flame should consume
her?
More fierce than all fires are her waves:
What is earth, that its gulfs should entomb
her?
More deep are her own than their graves.
Life shrinks from his pinions that cover
The darkness by thunders bedinned:
But she knows him, her lord and her lover,
The godhead of wind.

11.

For a season his wings are about her,
His breath on her lips for a space;
Such rapture he wins not without her
In the width of his worldwide race.
Though the forests bow down, and the mountains
Wax dark, and the tribes of them flee,
His delight is more deep in the fountains
And springs of the sea.

12.

There are those too of mortals that love him
There are souls that desire and require,
Be the glories of midnight above him
Or beneath him the dayspring of fire:
And their hearts are as harps that approve him
And praise him as chords of a lyre
That were fain with their music to move him
To meet their desire.

13.

To descend through the darkness to grace
them,
Till darkness were lovelier than light:
To encompass and grasp and embrace them,
Till their weakness were one with his might:
With the strength of his wings to caress them

With the blast of his breath to set free;
With the mouths of his thunders to bless them
For sons of the sea.

14.

For these have the toil and the guerdon
That the wind has eternally: these
Have part in the boon and the burden
Of the sleepless unsatisfied breeze,
That finds not, but seeking rejoices
That possession can work him no wrong:
And the voice at the heart of their voice is
The sense of his song.

15.

For the wind's is their doom and their blessing:
To desire, and have always above
A possession beyond their possessing,
A love beyond reach of their love.
Green earth has her sons and her daughters,
And these have their guerdons; but we
Are the wind's and the sun's and the water's,
Elect of the sea.

V.

1.

For the sea too seeks and rejoices,
Gains and loses and gains,
And the joy of her heart's own choice is
As ours, and as ours are her pains:
As the thoughts of our hearts are her voices,
And as hers is the pulse of our veins.

2.

Her fields that know not of dearth
Nor lie for their fruit's sake fallow
Laugh large in the depth of their mirth:
But inshore here in the shallow,
Embroiled with encumbrance of earth,
Their skirts are turbid and yellow.

3.

The grime of her greed is upon her
The sign of her deed is her soil;
As the earth's is her own dishonor,
And corruption the crown of her toil:
She hath spoiled and devoured, and her honor
Is this, to be shamed by her spoil.

4.

But afar where pollution is none,
Nor ensign of strife nor endeavor,
Where her heart and the sun's are one,
And the soil of her sin comes never,
She is pure as the wind and the sun,
And her sweetness endureth for ever.

VI.

1.

Death, and change, and darkness everlasting,
Deaf, that hears not what the daystar saith,
Blind, past all remembrance and forecasting,
Dead, past memory that it once drew breath;
These, above the washing tides and wasting,
Reign, and rule this land of utter death.

2.

Change of change, darkness of darkness, hidden,
Very death of very death, begun
When none knows,—the knowledge is forbidden—
Self-begotten, self-proceeding, one,
Born, not made—abhorred, unchained, unchidden,
Night stands here defiant of the sun.

3.

Change of change, and death of death begotten,
Darkness born of darknes, one and three,
Ghostly godhead of a world forgotten,
Crowned with heaven, enthroned on land and sea,
Here, where earth with dead men's bones is rotten,
God of Time, thy likeness worships thee.

4.

Lo. thy likeness of thy desolation,
Shape and figure of thy might, O Lord,
Formless form, incarnate miscreation
Served of all things living and abhorred ;
Earth herself is here thine incarnation,
Time of all things born on earth abored.

5.

All that worship thee are fearful of thee;
No man may not worship thee for fear :
Prayers nor curses prove not nor disprove thee,
Move nor change thee with our change of cheer:
All at last, though all abhorred thee, love thee,
God, the sceptre of whose throne is here.

6.

Here thy throne and sceptre of thy station,
Here the palace paven for thy feet ;
Here thy sign from nation unto nation
Passed as watchword for thy guards to greet,
Guards that go before thine exaltation,
Ages, clothed with bitter years and sweet.

7.

Here, where sharp the sea-bird shrills his ditty,
Flickering flame-wise through the clear live calm,
Rose triumphal, crowning all a city,
Roofs exalted once with prayer and psalm,
Built of holy hands for holy pity,
Frank and fruitful as a sheltering palm.

8.

Church and hospice wrought in faultless fasnion,
Hall and chancel bounteous and sublime,
Wide and sweet and glorious as compassion,
Filled and thrilled with force of choral chime,
Filled with spirit of prayer and thrilled with passion,
Hailed a God more merciful than Time.

9.

Ah, less mighty, less than Time prevailing,
Shrunk, expelled, made nothing at his nod,
Less than clouds across the sea-line sailing,
Lies he, stricken by his master's rod.
'Where is man?' the cloister murmurs wailing ;
Back the mute shrine thunders—'Where is God?'

10.

Here is all the end of all his glory—
Dust, and grass, and barren silent stones.
Dead, like him, one hollow tower and hoary
Naked in the sea-wind stands and moans,
Filled and thrilled with its perpetual story :
Here, where earth is dense with dead men's bones.

11.

Low and loud and long, a voice for ever,
Sounds the wind's clear story like a song.
Tomb from tomb the waves devouring sever,
Dust from dust as years relapse along ;
Graves where men made sure to rest, and never
Lie dismantled by the seasons' wrong.

12.

Now displaced, devoured and desecrated,
Now by Time's hands darkly disinterred,
These poor dead that sleeping here awaited
Long the archangel's re-creating word,
Closed about with roofs and walls high-gated
Till the blast of judgment should be heard,

13.

Naked, shamed, cast out of consecration,
Corpse and coffin, yea the very graves,
Scoffed at, scattered, shaken from their station,
Spurned and scourged of wind and sea like slaves,
Desolate beyond man's desolation,
Shrink and sink into the waste of waves.

14.

Tombs, with bare white piteous bones protruded,
Shroudless, down the loose collapsing banks,
Crumble, from their constant place detruded,
That the sea devours and gives not thanks.
Graves where hope and prayer and sorrow brooded
Gape and slide and perish, ranks on ranks.

15.

Rows on rows and line by line they crumble,
They that thought for all time through to be.
Scarce a stone whereon a child might stumble
Breaks the grim field paced alone of me.
Earth, and man, and all their gods wax humble,
Here, where Time brings pasture to the sea.

VII.

1.

But afar on the headland exalted,
But beyond in the curl of the bay,
From the depth of his dome deep-vaulted
Our father is lord of the day.
Our father and lord that we follow,
For deathless and ageless is he;
And his robe is the whole sky's hollow,
His sandal the sea.

2.

Where the horn of the headland is sharper,
And her green floor glitters with fire,
The sea has the sun for a harper,
The sun has the sea for a lyre.
The waves are a pavement of amber,
By the feet of the sea-winds trod
To receive in a god's presence-chamber
Our father, the God.

3.

Time, haggard and changeful and hoary,
Is master and God of the land:
But the air is fulfilled of the glory
That is shed from our lord's right hand.
O father of all of us ever,
All glory be only to thee
From heaven, that is void of thee never
And earth, and the sea.

4.

O Sun, whereof all is beholden,
Behold now the shadow of this death,
This place of the sepulchres, olden
And emptied and vain as a breath.
The bloom of the bountiful heather
Laughs broadly beyond in thy light,
As dawn, with her glories to gather,
At darkness and night.

5.

Though the Gods of the night lie rotten
And their honor be taken away
And the noise of their names forgotten,
Thou, Lord, art God of the day.
Thou art father and saviour and spirit,
O Sun, of the soul that is free
And hath grace of thy grace to inherit
Thine earth and thy sea.

6.

The hills and the sands and the beaches,
The waters adrift and afar,
The banks and the creeks and the reaches,
How glad of thee all these are!
The flowers, overflowing, overcrowded,
Are drunk with the mad wind's mirth:
The delight of thy coming unclouded
Makes music of earth.

7

I, last least voice of her voices,
Give thanks that were mute in me long
To the soul in my soul that rejoices
For the song that is over my song.
Time gives what he gains for the giving
Or takes for his tribute of me;
My dreams to the wind everliving,
My song to the sea.

GRAND CHORUS OF BIRDS FROM ARISTOPHANES ATTEMPTED IN ENGLISH AFTER THE ORIGINAL METRE.

[I was allured into the audacity of this experiment by consideration of a fact which hitherto does not seem to have been taken into consideration by any translator of the half divine humourist in whose incomparable genius the highest qualities of Rabelais were fused and harmonized with the supremest gifts of Shelley: namely that his marvellous metrical invention of the anapæstic heptameter was almost exactly reproducible in a language to which all variations and combinations of anapæstic, iambic, or trochaic metre are as natural and pliable as all dactylic and spondaic forms of verse are unnatural and abhorrent. As it happens, this highest central interlude of a most adorable masterpiece is as easy to detach from its dramatic setting, and even from its lyrical context, as it was easy to give line for line of it in English. In two metrical points only does my version vary from the verbal pattern of the original. I have of course added rhymes, and double rhymes, as necessary makeweights for the imperfection of an otherwise inadequate language; and equally of course I have not attempted the impossible and undesirable task of reproducing the rare exceptional effect of a line overcharged on purpose with a preponderance of heavy-footed spondees: and this for the obvious reason that even if such a line—which I doubt—could be exactly represented, foot by foot and pause for pause, in English, this English line would no more be a verse in any proper sense of the word than is the line I am writing at this moment. And my main intention, or at least my main desire, in the undertaking of this brief adventure was to renew as far as possible for English ears the music of this resonant and thriumphant metre, which goes ringing at full gallop as of horses who

'dance as 'twere to the music
Their own hoofs make.'

I would not seem over curious in search of an apt or an inapt quotation; but nothing can be fitter than a verse of Shakspere's to praise at once and to describe the most typical verse of Aristophanes.]

(*The Birds*, 685-723.)

COME on then, ye dwellers by nature in darkness, and like to the leaves' generations,
That are little of might, that are moulded of mire, unenduring and shadowlike nations,
Poor plumeless ephemerals, comfortless mortals, as visions of shadows fast fleeing,
Lift up your mind unto us that are deathless, and dateless the date of our being:
Us, children of heaven, us, ageless for aye, us, all of whose thoughts are eternal;
That ye may from henceforth, having heard of us all things aright as to matters supernal,
Of the being of birds and beginning of gods, and of streams, and the dark beyond reaching,
Truthfully knowing aright, in my name bid Prodicus pack with his preaching.
It was Chaos and Night at the first, and the blackness of darkness, and Hell's broad border,
Earth was not, nor air, neither heaven; when in depths of the womb of the dark without order
First thing first-born of the black-plumed Night was a wind-egg hatched in her bosom,
Whence timely with seasons revolving again sweet Love burst out as a blossom,
Gold wings glittering forth of his back, like whirlwinds gustily turning.
He, after his wedlock with Chaos, whose wings are of darkness, in Hell broad-burning,
For his nestlings begat him the race of us first, and upraised us to light new-lighted.
And before this was not the race of the gods, until all things by Love were united:
And of kind united with kind in communion of nature the sky and the sea are
Brought forth, and the earth, and the race of the gods everlasting and blest. So that we are
Far away the most ancient of all things blest.
And that we are of Love's generation
There are manifest manifold signs. We have wings, and with us have the Love's halitation;
And manifold fair young folk that forswore love once, ere the bloom of them ended,

Have the men that pursued and desired them subdued, by the help of us only befriended,
With such baits as a quail, a flamingo, a goose, or a cock's comb staring and splendid.
All best good things that befall men come from us birds, as is plain to all reason :
For first we proclaim and make known to them spring, and the winter and autumn in season ;
Bid sow, when the crane starts clanging for Afric, in shrill-voiced emigrant number,
And calls to the pilot to hang up his rudder again for the season, and slumber ;
And then weave a cloak for Orestes the thief, lest he strip men of theirs if it freezes.
And again thereafter the kite reappearing announces a change in the breezes,
And that here is the season for shearing your sheep of their spring wool. Then does the swallow
Give you notice to sell your greatcoat, and provide something light for the heat that's to follow.
Thus are we as Ammon or Delphi unto you, Dodona, nay, Phœbus Apollo.
For, as first ye come all to get auguries of birds, even such is in all things your carriage,
Be the matter a matter of trade, or of earning your bread, or of any one's marriage.
And all things ye lay to the charge of a bird that belong to discerning prediction :
Winged fame is a bird, as you reckon : you sneeze, and the sign's as a bird for conviction :
All tokens are "birds" with you—sounds too, and lackeys, and donkeys. Then must it not follow
That we ARE to you all as the manifest godhead that speaks in prophetic Apollo ?

ATHENS:

AN ODE.

ERE from under earth again like fire the violet kindle, [*Str.* 1.
Ere the holy buds and hoar on olive-branches bloom.
Ere the crescent of the last pale month of winter dwindle,
Shrink, and fall as falls a dead leaf on the dead month's tomb,
Round the hills whose heights the first-born olive-blossom brightened,
Round the city brow-bound once with violets like a bride,
Up from under earth again a light that long since lightened
Breaks, whence all the world took comfort as all time takes pride.
Pride have all men in their fathers that were free before them,
In the warriors that begat us free-born pride have we:
But the fathers of their spirits, how may men adore them,
With what rapture may we praise, who bade our souls be free?
Sons of Athens born in spirit and truth are all born free men;
Most of all, we, nurtured where the north wind holds his reign:
Children all we sea-folk of the Salaminian seamen,
Sons of them that beat back Persia they that beat back Spain.
Since the songs of Greece fell silent, none like ours have risen;
Since the sails of Greece fell slack, no ships have sailed like ours;
How should we lament not, if her spirit sit in prison?
How should we rejoice not, if her wreaths renew their flowers?
All the world is sweeter, if the Athenian violet quicken:
All the world is brighter, if the Athenian sun return:
All things foul on earth wax fainter, by that sun's light stricken:
All ill growths are withered, where those fragrant flower-lights burn.
All the wandering waves of seas with all their warring waters
Roll the record on forever of the sea-fight there,
When the capes were battle's lists, and all the straits were slaughter's,
And the myriad Medes as foam-flakes on the scattering air.
Ours the lightning was that cleared the north and lit the nations,
But the light that gave the whole world light of old was she:
Ours an age or twain, but hers are endless generations:
All the world is hers at heart, and most of all are we.

Ye that bear the name about you of her glory, [*Ant.* 1.
Men that wear the sign of Greeks upon you sealed,
Yours is yet the choice to write yourselves in story
Sons of them that fought the Marathonian field.
Slaves of no man were ye, said your warrior poet,
Neither subject unto man as underlings:
Yours is now the season here wherein to show it,
If the seed ye be of them that knew not kings.
If ye be not, swords nor words alike found brittle
From the dust of death to raise you shall prevail:
Subject swords and dead men's words may stead you little,
If their old king-hating heart within you fail.
If your spirit of old, and not your bonds, be broken,
If the kingless heart be molten in your breasts,
By what signs and wonders, by what word or token,
Shall ye drive the voltures from your eagles' nests?
All the gains of tyrants Freedom counts for losses;
Nought of all the work done holds she worth the work,
When the slaves whose faith is set on crowns and crosses

Drive the Cossack bear against the tiger Turk.
Neither cross nor crown nor crescent shall ye bow to,
Nought of Araby nor Jewry, priest nor king:
As your watchword was of old, so be it now too:
As from lips long stilled, from yours let healing spring.
Through the fights of old, your battle-cry was healing,
And the Saviour that ye called on was the Sun:
Dawn by dawn behold in heaven your God, revealing
Light from darkness as when Marathon was won.
Gods were yours yet strange to Turk or Galilean,
Light and Wisdom only then as gods adored:
Pallas was your shield, your comforter was Pæan,
From your bright world's navel spake the Sun your Lord.

Though the names be lost, and changed the signs of Light and Wisdom be, [*Ep.* 1.
By these only shall men conquer, by these only be set free:
When the whole world's eye was Athens, these were yours, and theirs were ye.
Light was given you of your wisdom, light ye gave the world again:
As the sun whose godhead lightened on her soul was Hellas then:
Yea, the least of all her children as the chosen of other men.
Change your hearts not with your garments, nor your faith with creeds that change:
Truth was yours, the truth which time and chance transform not nor estrange:
Purer truth nor higher abides not in the reach of time's whole range.
Gods are they in all men's memories and for all time's periods,
They that hurled the host back seaward which had scourged the sea with rods:
Gods for us are all your fathers, even the least of these as gods.
In the dark of days the thought of them is with us, strong to save,
They that had no lord, and made the Great King lesser than a slave;
They that rolled all Asia back on Asia, broken like a wave.
No man's men were they, no master's and no God's but these their own:
Gods not loved in vain nor served amiss, nor all yet overthrown:
Love of country, Freedom, Wisdom, Light, and none save these alone.
King by king came up against them, sire and son, and turned to flee:
Host on host roared westward, mightier each than each, if more might be:
Field to field made answer, clamorous like as wave to wave at sea.
Strife to strife responded, loud as rocks to clangorous rocks respond
Where the deep rings wreck to seamen held in tempest's thrall and bond,
Till when war's bright work was perfect peace as radiant rose beyond:
Peace made bright with fruit of battle, stronger made for storm gone down,
With the flower of song held heavenward for the violet of her crown
Woven about the fragrant forehead of the fostress maiden's town.
Gods arose alive on earth from under stroke of human hands:
As the hands that wrought them, these are dead, and mixed with time's dead sands:
But the godhead of supernal song, though these now stand not, stands.
Pallas is not, Phœbus breathes no more in breathing brass or gold:
Clytæmnestra towers, Cassandra wails, forever: Time is bold,
But nor heart nor hand hath he to unwrite the scriptures writ of old.
Dead the great chryselephantine God, as dew last evening shed:
Dust of earth or foam of ocean is the symbol of his head:
Earth and ocean shall be shadows when Prometheus shall be dead.

Fame around her warriors living rang through Greece and lightened, [*Str.* 2.
Moving equal with their stature, stately with their strength:
Thebes and Lacedæmon at their breathing presence brightened,
Sense or sound of them filled all the live land's breadth and length.
All the lesser tribes put on the pure Athenian fashion,
One Hellenic heart was from the mountains to the sea:
Sparta's bitter self grew sweet with high half-human passion,
And her dry thorns flushed aflower in strait Thermopylæ.

Fruitless yet the flowers had fallen, and all
the deeds died fruitless,
Save that tongues of after men, the children
of her peace,
Took the tale up of her glories, transient else
and rootless,
And in ears and hearts of all men left the
praise of Greece.
Fair the war-time was when still, as beacon
answering beacon,
Sea to land flashed fight, and thundered
note of wrath or cheer;
But the strength of noonday night hath power
to waste and weaken,
Nor may light be passed from hand to
hand of year to year
If the dying deed be saved not, ere it die for
ever,
By the hands and lips of men more wise
than years are strong;
If the soul of man take heed not that the
deed die never,
Clothed about with purple and gold of
story, crowned with song.
Still the burning heart of boy and man alike
rejoices,
Hearing words which made it seem of old
for all who sang
That their heaven of heavens waxed happier
when from free men's voices
Well-beloved Harmodius and Aristogeiton
rang.
Never fell such fragrance from the flower-
month's rose-red kirtle
As from chaplets on the bright friends'
brows who slew their lord:
Greener grew the leaf and balmier blew the
flower of myrtle
When its blossom sheathed the sheer tyran-
nicidal sword.
None so glorious garland crowned the feast
Panathenæan
As this wreath too frail to fetter fast the
Cyprian dove:
None so fiery song sprang sunwards annual
as the pæan
Praising perfect love of friends and perfect
country's love.

Higher than highest of all those heavens
wherefrom the starry [*Ant.* 2.
Song of Homer shone above the rolling
fight,
Gleams like spring's green bloom on boughs
all gaunt and gnarry
Soft live splendor as of flowers of foam in
flight,
Glows a glory of mild-winged maidens up-
ward mounting
Sheer through air made shrill with strokes
of smooth swift wings
Round the rocks beyond foot's reach, past
eyesight's counting,
Up the cleft where iron wind of winter
rings
Round a God fast clenched in iron jaws of
fetters,
Him who culled for man the fruitful flower
of fire,
Bared the darkling scriptures writ in dazzling
letters,
Taught the truth of dreams deceiving
men's desire,
Gave their water-wandering chariot-seats of
ocean
Wings, and bade the rage of war-steeds
champ the rein,
Showed the symbols of the wild birds' wheel-
ing motion,
Waged for man's sake war with God and all
his train.
Earth, whose name was also Righteousness, a
mother
Many-named and single-natured, gave
him breath
Whence God's wrath could wring but this
word and none other—
He may smite me, yet he shall not do to death.
Him the tongue that sang triumphant while
tormented
Sang as loud the sevenfold storm that
roared erewhile
Round the towers of Thebes till wrath might
rest contented:
Sang the flight from smooth soft-sanded
banks of Nile,
When like mateless doves that fly from snare
or tether
Came the suppliants landwards trembling
as they trod,
And the prayer took wing from all their
tongues together—
King of kings, most holy of holies, blessed
God.
But what mouth may chant again, what heart
may know it,
All the rapture that all hearts of men put on
When of Salamis the time-transcending poet
Sang, whose hand had chased the Mede at
Marathon?
Darker dawned the song with stormier wings
above the watch-fire spread [*Ep.* 2
Whence from Ida toward the hill of Hermes
leapt the light that said

Troy was fallen, a torch funereal for the king's
triumphal head.
Dire indeed the birth of Leda's womb that
had God's self to sire
Bloomed, a flower of love that stung the soul
with fangs that gnaw like fire :
But the twin-born human-fathered sister-
flower bore fruit more dire.
Scarce the cry that called on airy heaven and
all swift winds on wing,
Wells of river-heads, and countless laugh of
waves past reckoning,
Earth which brought forth all, and the orbèd
sun that looks on everything,
Scarce that cry fills yet men's hearts more
full of heart-devouring dread
Than the murderous word said mocking, how
the child whose blood he shed
Might clasp fast and kiss her father where the
dead salute the dead.
But the latter note of anguish from the lips
that mocked her lord,
When her son's hand bared against the breast
that suckled him his sword,
How might man endure, O Æschylus, to hear
it and record?
How might man endure, being mortal yet, O
thou most highest, to hear?
How record, being born of woman? Surely
not thy Furies near,
Surely this beheld, this only, blasted hearts
to death with fear.
Not the hissing hair, nor flakes of blood that
oozed from eyes of fire,
Nor the snort of savage sleep that snuffed the
hungering heart's desire
Where the hunted prey found hardly space
and harbor to respire ;
She whose likeness called them—'Sleep ye,
ho? what need of you that sleep?'
(Ah, what need indeed, where she was, of all
shapes that night may keep
Hidden dark as death and deeper than men's
dreams of hell are deep?)
She the murderess of her husband, she the
huntress of her son,
More than ye was she, the shadow that no
God withstands but one,
Wisdom equal-eyed and stronger and more
splendid than the sun.
Yea, no God may stand betwixt us and the
shadows of our deeds,
Nor the light of dreams that lighten darkness,
nor the prayer that pleads,
But the wisdom equal-souled with heaven,
the light alone that leads.
Light whose law bids home those childless
children of eternal night,
Soothed and reconciled and mastered and
transmuted in men's sight
Who behold their own souls, clothed with
darkness once, now clothed with light.
King of kings and father crowned of all our
fathers crowned of yore,
Lord of all the lords of song, whose head all
heads bow down before,
Glory be to thee from all thy sons in all
tongues evermore.

Rose and vine and olive and deep ivy-bloom
entwining [*Str.* 3.
Close the goodliest grave that e'er they
closeliest might entwine
Keep the wind from wasting and the sun
from too strong shining
Where the sound and light of sweetest
songs still float and shine.
Here the music seems to illume the shade,
the light to whisper
Song, the flowers to put not odors only
forth, but words
Sweeter far than fragrance : here the wander-
ing wreaths twine crisper
Far, and louder far exults the note of all
wild birds.
Thoughts that change us, joys that crown
and sorrows that enthrone us,
Passions that enrobe us with a clearer air
than ours,
Move and breathe as living things beheld
round white Colonus,
Audibler than melodies and visibler than
flowers.
Love, in fight unconquered, Love, with spoils
of great men laden,
Never sang so sweet from throat of woman
or of dove :
Love, whose bed by night is in the soft cheeks
of a maiden,
And his march is over seas, and low roofs
lack not Love ;
Nor may one of all that live, ephemeral or
eternal,
Fly nor hide from Love ; but whoso clasps
him fast goes mad.
Never since the first-born year with flowers
first-born grew vernal
Such a song made listening hearts of lovers
glad or sad.
Never sounded note so radiant at the rayless
portal
Opening wide on the all-concealing lowland
of the dead
As the music mingling, when her doomsday
marked her mortal,

From her own and old men's voices round
the bride's way shed,
Round the grave her bride-house, hewn for
endless habitation,
Where, shut out from sunshine, with no
bridegroom by, she slept;
But beloved of all her dark and fateful
generation,
But with all time's tears and praise be-
sprinkled and bewept:
Well-beloved of outcast father and self-
slaughtered mother,
Born, yet unpolluted, of their blind incestu-
ous bed;
Best-beloved of him for whose dead sake she
died, her brother,
Hallowing by her own life's gift her own
born brother's head:

Not with wine or oil nor any less libation
[*Ant.* 3.
Hallowed, nor made sweet with humbler
perfume's breath;
Not with only these redeemed from desecra-
tion,
But with blood and spirit of life poured
forth to death;
Blood unspotted, spirit unsullied, life devoted,
Sister too supreme to make the bride's
hope good,
Daughter too divine as woman to be noted,
Spouse of only death in mateless maiden-
hood.
Yea, in her was all the prayer fulfilled, the
saying
All accomplished—*Would that fate would
let me wear*
*Hallowed innocence of words and all deeds,
weighing*
Well the laws thereof, begot on holier air,
Far on high sublimely stablished, whereof only
*Heaven is father; nor did birth of mortal
mould*
*Bring them forth, nor shall oblivion lull to
lonely*
*Slumber. Great in these is God, and grows
not old.*
Therefore even that inner darkness where she
perished
Surely seems as holy and lovely, seen aright,
As desirable and as dearly to be cherished,
As the haunt closed in with laurels from
the light,
Deep inwound with olive and wild vine in-
woven,
Where a godhead known and unknown
makes men pale,
But the darkness of the twilight noon is cloven
Still with shrill sweet moan of many a
nightingale.
Closer clustering there they make sweet noise
together,
Where the fearful gods look gentler than
our fear,
And the grove thronged through with birds of
holiest feather
Grows nor pale nor dumb with sense of
dark things near.
There her father, called upon with signs of
wonder,
Passed with tenderest words away by ways
unknown,
Not by sea-storm stricken down, nor touched
of thunder,
To the dark benign deep underworld, alone.

Third of three that ruled in Athens, kings
with sceptral song for staff, [*Ep.* 3.
Gladdest heart that God gave ever milk and
wine of thought to quaff,
Clearest eye that lightened ever to the broad
lip's lordliest laugh,
Praise be thine as theirs whose tragic brows
the loftier leaf engirds
For the live and lyric lightning of thy honey-
hearted words,
Soft like sunny dewy wings of clouds and
bright as crying of birds;
Full of all sweet rays and notes that make of
earth and air and sea
One great light and sound of laughter from
one great God's heart, to be
Sign and semblance of the gladness of man's
life where men breathe free.
With no Loxian sound obscure God uttered
once, and all time heard,
All the soul of Athens, all the soul of England,
in that word:
Rome arose the second child of freedom:
northward rose the third.
Ere her Boreal dawn came kindling seas afoam
and fields of snow,
Yet again, while Europe groaned and grovel-
led, shone like suns aglow
Doria splendid over Genoa, Venice bright
with Dandolo.
Dead was Hellas, but Ausonia by the light
of dead men's deeds
Rose and walked awhile alive, though mocked
as whom the fen-fire leads
By the creed-wrought faith of faithless souls
that mock their doubts with creeds.
Dead are these, and man is risen again: and
haply now the Three
Yet coequal and triune may stand in story
marked as free

By the token of the washing of the waters of the sea.
Athens first of all earth's kindred many-tongued and many-kinned
Had the sea to friend and comfort, and for kinsman had the wind:
She that bare Columbus next: then she that made her spoil of Ind.
She that hears not what man's rage but only what the sea-wind saith:
She that turned Spain's ships to cloud-wrack at the blasting of her breath,
By her strengths of strong-souled children and of strong winds done to death.
North and south the Great King's galleons went in Persian wise: and here
She, with Æschylean music on her lips that laughed back fear,
In the face of Time's grey godhead shook the splendor of her spear.
Fair as Athens then with foot upon her foeman's front, and strong
Even as Athens for redemption of the world from sovereign wrong,
Like as Athens crowned she stood before the sun with crowning song.
All the world is theirs with whom is freedom: first of all the free,
Blest are they whom song has crowned and clothed with blessing: these as we,
These alone have part in spirit with the sun that crowns the sea.

THE STATUE OF VICTOR HUGO.

1.

SINCE in Athens God stood plain for adoration,
Since the sun beheld his likeness reared in stone,
Since the bronze or gold of human consecration
Gave to Greece her guardian's form and feature shown,
Never hand of sculptor, never heart of nation,
Found so glorious a thing in all these ages flown
As is theirs who rear for all time's acclamation
Here the likeness of our mightiest and their own.

2.

Theirs and ours and all men's living who behold him
Crowned with garlands multiform and manifold;
Praise and thanksgiving of all mankind enfold him
Who for all men casts abroad his gifts of gold.
With the gods of song have all men's tongues enrolled him,
With the helpful gods have all men's hearts enrolled:
Ours he is who love him, ours whose hearts' hearts hold him
Fast as his the trust that hearts like his may hold.

3.

He, the heart most high, the spirit on earth most blameless,
Takes in charge all spirits, holds all hearts in trust:
As the sea-wind's on the sea his ways are tameless,
As the laws that steer the world his works are just.
All most noble feel him nobler, all most shameless
Feel his wrath and scorn make pale their pride and lust:
All most poor and lowliest, all whose wrongs were nameless,
Feel his word of comfort raise them from the dust.

4.

Pride of place and lust of empire bloody-fruited
Knew the blasting of his breath on leaf and fruit:
Now the hand that smote the death-tree now disrooted
Plants the refuge-tree that has man's hope for root.
Ah, but we by whom his darkness was saluted,
How shall now all we that see his day salute?
How should love not seem by love's own speech confuted,
Song before the sovereign singer not be mute?

5.

With what worship, by what blessing, in what measure,
May we sing of him, salute him, or adore,
With what hymn for praise, what thanksgiving for pleasure,
Who had given us more than heaven, and gives us more?
Heaven's whole treasury, filled up full with night's whole treasure,
Holds not so divine or deep a starry store
As the soul supreme that deals forth worlds at leisure
Clothed with light and darkness, dense with flower and ore.

6.

Song had touched the bourn: fresh verses overflow it,
Loud and radiant, waves on waves on waves that throng;
Still the tide grows, and the sea-mark still below it
Sinks and shifts and rises, changed and swept along.
Rose it like a rock? the waters overthrow it,
And another stands beyond them sheer and strong:
Goal by goal pays down its prize, and yields its poet
Tribute claimed of triumph, palm achieved of song

7.

Since his hand that holds the keys of fear and wonder
Opened on the high priest's dreaming eyes a door
Whence the lights of heaven and hell above and under
Shone, and smote the face that men bow down before,
Thrice again one singer's note had cloven in sunder
Night, who blows again not one blast now but four,
And the fourfold heaven is kindled with his thunder,
And the stars about his forehead are fourscore.

8.

From the deep soul's depths where alway love abounded
First had risen a song with healing on its wings
Whence the dews of mercy raining balms unbounded
Shed their last compassion even on sceptre things.[1]
Even on heads that like a curse the crown surrounded
Fell his crowning pity, soft as cleansing springs;
And the sweet last note his wrath relenting sounded
Bade men's heart's be melted not for slaves but kings.

9.

Next, that faith might strengthen fear and love embolden,
On the creeds of priests a scourge of sunbeams fell:
And its flash made bare the deeps of heaven, beholden
Not of men that cry, Lord, Lord, from church or cell.[2]
Hope as young as dawn from night obscure and olden
Rose again, such power abides in truth's one spell:
Night, if dawn it be that touches her, grows golden;
Tears, if such as angels weep, extinguish hell.

10.

Through the blind loud mills of barren bleareyed learning
Where in dust and darkness children's foreheads bow,
While men's labor, vain as wind or water turning
Wheels and sails of dreams, makes life a leafless bough,
Fell the light of scorn and pity touched with yearning,
Next, from words that shone as heaven's own kindling brow,[3]
Stars were these as watch-fires on the world's waste burning,
Stars that fade not in the fourfold sunrise now.[4]

11.

Now the voice that faints not till all wrongs be wroken
Sounds as night the sun's song from the morning's breast,

[1] *La Pitié Suprême.* 1879.
[2] *Religions et Religion.* 1880.
[3] *L'Ane.* 1880.
[4] *Les Quatre Vents de l'Esprit.* I. *Le Livre satirique.* II. *Le Livre dramatique.* III. *Le Livre lyrique.* IV. *Le Livre épique.* 1881.

All the seals of silence sealed of night are broken,
All the winds that bear the fourfold word are blest.
All the keen fierce east flames forth one fiery token;
All the north is loud with life that knows not rest,
All the south with song as though the stars had spoken;
All the judgment-fire of sunset scathes the west.

12.

Sound of pæan, roll of chanted panegyric,
Though by Pindar's mouth song's trumpet spake forth praise,
March of warrior songs in Pythian mood or Pyrrhic,
Though the blast were blown by lips of ancient days,
Ring not clearer than the clarion of satiric
Song whose breath sweeps bare the plague-infected ways
Till the world be pure as heaven is for the lyric
Sun to rise up clothed with radiant sounds as rays.

13.

Clear across the cloud-rack fluctuant and erratic
As the strong star smiles that lets no mourner mourn,
Hymned alike from lips of Lesbian choirs or Attic
Once at evensong and morning newly born,
Clear and sure above the changes of dramatic
Tide and current, soft with love and keen with scorn,
Smiles the strong sweet soul of maidenhood, ecstatic
And inviolate as the red glad mouth of morn.

14.

Pure and passionate as dawn, whose apparition
Thrills with fire from heaven the wheels of hours that whirl,
Rose and passed her radiance in serene transition
From his eyes who sought a grain and found a pearl.
But the food by cunning hope for vain fruition
Lightly stolen away from keeping of a churl
Left the bitterness of death and hope's perdition
On the lip that scorn was wont for shame to curl.[1]

15.

Over waves that darken round the wave-worn rover
Rang his clarion higher than winds cried round the ship,
Rose a pageant of set suns and storms blown over,
Hands that held life's guerdons fast or let them slip.
But no tongue may tell, no thanksgiving discover,
Half the heaven of blessing, soft with clouds that drip.
Keen with beams that kindle, dear as love to lover,
Opening by the spell's strength on his lyric lip.

16

By that spell the soul transfigured and dilated
Puts forth wings that widen, breathes a brightening air,
Feeds on light and drinks of music, whence elated
All her sense grows godlike, seeing all depths made bare.
All the mists wherein before she sat belated
Shrink, till now the sunlight knows not if they were;
All this earth transformed is Eden recreated,
With the breath of heaven remurmuring in her hair.

17.

Sweeter far than aught of sweet that April nurses
Deep in dew-dropt woodland folded fast and furled
Breathes the fragrant song whose burning dawn disperses
Darkness, like the surge of armies backward hurled.
Even as though the touch of spring's own hand, that pierces
Earth with life's delight, had hidden in the impearled
Golden bells and buds and petals of his verses
All the breath of all the flowers in all the world.

18.

But the soul therein, the light that our souls follow,
Fires and fills the song with more of prophet's pride,

[1] *Les Deux Trouvailles de Gallus.* I. *Margarita, comédie.* II. *Esca, drame.*

More of life than all the gulfs of death may swallow,
More of flame than all the might of night may hide.
Though the whole dark age were loud and void and hollow,
Strength of trust were here, and help for all souls tried,
And a token from the flight of that strange swallow [1]
Whose migration still is toward the wintry side.

19.

Never came such token for divine solution
From the oraculous live darkness whence of yore
Ancient faith sought word of help and retribution,
Truth to lighten doubt, a sign to go before.
Never so baptismal waters of ablution
Bathed the brows of exile on so stern a shore,
Where the lightnings of the sea of revolution
Flashed across them ere its thunders yet might roar.

20.

By the lightning's light of present revelation
Shown, with epic thunder as from skies that frown,
Clothed in darkness as of darkling expiation,
Rose a vision of dead stars and suns gone down,
Whence of old fierce fire devoured the star-struck nation.
Till its wrath and woe lit red the raging town,
Now made glorious with his statue's crowning station,
Where may never gleam again a viler crown.

21.

King, with time for throne and all the years for pages,
He shall reign though all thrones else be overhurled,
Served of souls that have his living words for wages,
Crowned of heaven each dawn that leaves his brows impearled ;
Girt about with robes unrent of storm that rages,
Robes not wrought with hands, from no loom's weft unfurled ;

Je suis une hirondelle étrange, car j'émigre
1 Du côté de l'hiver.
Le Livre Lyrique, liii.

All the praise of all earth's tongues in all earth's ages,
All the love of all men's hearts in all the world.

22.

Yet what hand shall carve the soul or cast the spirit,
Mould the face of fame, bid glory's feature glow ?
Who bequeath for eyes of ages hence to inherit
Him, the Master, whom love knows not if it know ?
Scarcely perfect praise of men man's work might merit,
Scarcely bid such aim to perfect stature grow,
Were his hand the hand of Phidias who shall rear it,
And his soul the very soul of Angelo.

23.

Michael, awful angel of the world's last session,
Once on earth, like him, with fire of suffering tried,
Thine it were, if man's it were, without transgression,
Thine alone, to take this toil upon thy pride.
Thine, whose heart was great against the world's oppression,
Even as his whose word is lamp and staff and guide :
Advocate for man, untired of intercession,
Pleads his voice for slaves whose lords his voice defied.

24.

Earth, with all the kings and thralls on earth, below it,
Heaven alone, with all the worlds in heaven, above,
Let his likeness rise for suns and stars to know it, [love :
High for men to worship, plain for men to
Brow that braved the tides which fain would overflow it,
Lip that gave the challenge, hand that flung the glove ;
Comforter and prophet, Paraclete and poet,
Soul whose emblems are an eagle and a dove.

25.

Sun, that hast not seen a loftier head wax hoary,
Earth, which hast not shown the sun a nobler birth,

Time, that hast not on thy scroll defiled and gory
One man's name writ brighter in its whole wide girth,
Witness, till the final years fulfil their story,
Till the stars break off the music of their mirth, [glory,
What among the sons of men was this man's
What the vesture of his soul revealed on earth.

SONNETS.

HOPE AND FEAR.

BENEATH the shadow of dawn's aerial cope,
With eyes enkindled as the sun's own sphere,
Hope from the front of youtn in godlike cheer
Looks Godward, past the shades where blind men grope
Round the dark door that prayers nor dreams can ope,
And makes for joy the very darkness dear
That gives her wide wings play; nor dreams that fear
At noon may rise and pierce the heart of hope.
Then, when the soul leaves off to dream and yearn,
May truth first purge her eyesight to discern
What once being known leaves time no power to appal;
Till youth at last, ere yet youth be not, learn
The kind wise word that falls from years that fall—
'Hope thou not much, and fear thou not at all.'

AFTER SUNSET.

'Si quis piorum Manibus locus.'

I.

STRAIGHT from the sun's grave in the deep clear west
A sweet strong wind blows, glad of life: and I,
Under the soft keen stardawn whence the sky
Takes life renewed, and all night's godlike breast
Palpitates, gradually revealed at rest
By growth and change of ardors felt on high,
Make onward, till the last flame fall and die
And all the world by night's broad hand lie blest.
Haply, meseems, as from that edge of death,
Whereon the day lies dark, a brightening breath
Blows more of benediction than the morn,
So from the graves whereon grief gazing saith
That half our heart of life there lies forlorn
May light or breath at least of hope be born.

II.

The wind was soft before the sunset fled:
Now, while the cloud-enshrouded corpse of day
Is lowered along a red funereal way
Down to the dark that knows not white from red,
A clear sheer breeze against the night makes head,
Serene, but sure of life as ere a ray
Springs, or the dusk of dawn knows red from gray,
Being as a soul that knows not quick from dead.
From far beyond the sunset, far above,
Full toward the starry soundless east it blows
Bright as a child's breath breathing on a rose,
Smooth to the sense as plume of any dove;
Till more and more as darkness grows and glows
Silence and night seem likest life and love.

III.

If light of life outlive the set of sun
That men call death and end of all things, then
How should not that which life held best for men
And proved most precious, though it seem undone
By force of death and woful victory won,
Be first and surest of revival, when
Death shall bow down to life arisen again?
So shall the soul seen be the self-same one
That looked and spake with even such lips and eyes
As love shall doubt not then to recognize,
And all bright thoughts and smiles of all time past
Revive, transfigured, but in spirit and sense
None other than we knew, for evidence
That love's last mortal word was not his last.

A STUDY FROM MEMORY.

If that be yet a living soul which here
Seemed brighter for the growth of numbered springs
And clothed by Time and Pain with goodlier things
Each year it saw fulfilled a fresh fleet year.
Death can have changed not aught that made it dear;
Half humorous goodness, grave-eyed mirth on wings
Bright-balanced, blither-voiced than quiring strings;
Most radiant patience, crowned with conquering cheer;
A spirit inviolable that smiled and sang
By might of nature and heroic need
More sweet and strong than loftiest dream or deed;
A song that shone, a light whence music rang
High as the sunniest heights of kindliest thought;
All these must be, or all she was be nought.

TO DR. JOHN BROWN.

Beyond the north wind lay the land of old
Where men dwelt blithe and blameless, clothed and fed
With joy's bright raiment and with love's sweet bread,
The whitest flock of earth's maternal fold.
None there might wear about his brows enrolled
A light of lovelier fame than rings your head,
Whose lovesome love of children and the dead
All men give thanks for: I far off behold
A dear dead hand that links us, and a light
The blithest and benignest of the night,
The night of death's sweet sleep, wherein may be
A star to show your spirit in present sight
Some happier island in the Elysian sea
Where Rab may lick the hand of Marjorie.

TO WILLIAM BELL SCOTT.

The larks are loud above our leagues of whin
Now the sun's perfume fills their glorious gold
With odor like the color: all the wold
Is only light and song and wind wherein
These twain are blent in one with shining din.
And now your gift, a giver's kingly-souled,
Dear old fast friend whose honors grow not old,
Bids memory's note as loud and sweet begin.
Though all but we from life be now gone forth
Of that bright household in our joyous north
Where I, scarce clear of boyhood just at end,
First met your hand; yet under life's clear dome,
Now seventy strenuous years have crowned my friend,
Shines no less bright his full-sheaved harvest-home.

A DEATH ON EASTER DAY.

The strong spring sun rejoicingly may rise,
Rise and make revel, as of old men said,
Like dancing hearts of lovers newly wed:
A light more bright than ever bathed the skies
Departs for all time out of all men's eyes.
The crowns that girt last night a living head
Shine only now, though deathless, on the dead:
Art that mocks death, and Song that never dies.
Albeit the bright sweet mothlike wings be furled,
Hope sees, past all division and defection,
And higher than swims the mist of human breath,
The soul most radiant once in all the world
Requickened to regenerate resurrection
Out of the likeness of the shadow of death.

ON THE DEATHS OF THOMAS CARLYLE AND GEORGE ELIOT.

Two souls diverse out of our human sight
Pass, followed one with love and each with wonder:
The stormy sophist with his mouth of thunder,
Clothed with loud words and mantled in the might
Of darkness and magnificence of night;

And one whose eye could smite the night in sunder,
Searching if light or no light were thereunder,
And found in love of loving-kindness light.
Duty divine and Thought with eyes of fire
Still following Righteousness with deep desire
Shone sole and stern before her and above,
Sure stars and sole to steer by; but more sweet
Shone lower the loveliest lamp for earthly feet,
The light of little children, and their love.

AFTER LOOKING INTO CARLYLE'S REMINISCENCES.

I.

THREE men lived yet when this dead man was young
Whose names and words endure forever: one
Whose eyes grew dim with straining toward the sun,
And his wings weakened, and his angel's tongue
Lost half the sweetest song was ever sung,
But like the strain half uttered earth hears none,
Nor shall man hear till all men's songs are done:
One whose clear spirit like an eagle hung
Between the mountains hallowed by his love
And the sky stainless as his soul above:
And one the sweetest heart that ever spake
The brightest words wherein sweet wisdom smiled.
These deathless names by this dead snake defiled
Bid memory spit upon him for their sake.

II.

Sweet heart, forgive me for thine own sweet sake,
Whose kind blithe soul such seas of sorrow swam,
And for my love's sake, powerless as I am
For love to praise thee, or like thee to make
Music of mirth where hearts less pure would break,
Less pure than thine, our life-unspotted Lamb.
Things hatefullest thou hadst not heart to damn,
Nor wouldst have set thine heel on this dead snake.
Let worms consume its memory with its tongue,
The fang that stabbed fair Truth, the lip that stung
Men's memories uncorroded with its breath.
Forgive me, that with bitter words like his
I mix the gentlest English name that is,
The tenderest held of all that know not death.

A LAST LOOK.

SICK of self-love, Malvolio, like an owl
That hoots the sun rerisen where starlight sank,
With German garters crossed athwart thy frank
Stout Scottish legs, men watched thee snarl and scowl,
And boys responsive with reverberate howl
Shrilled, hearing how to thee the springtime stank
And as thine own soul all the world smelt rank
And as thine own thoughts Liberty seemed foul.
Now, for all ill thoughts nursed and ill words given
Not all condemned, not utterly forgiven,
Son of the storm and darkness, pass in peace.
Peace upon earth thou knewest not: now, being dead,
Rest, with nor curse nor blessing on thine head,
Where high-strung hate and strenuous envy cease.

DICKENS.

CHIEF in thy generation born of men
Whom English praise acclaimed as English-born,
With eyes that matched the worldwide eyes of morn
For gleam of tears or laughter, tenderest then
When thoughts of children warmed their light, or when
Reverence of age with love and labor worn,
Or godlike pity fired with godlike scorn,
Shot through them flame that winged thy swift live pen:
Where stars and suns that we behold not burn.

Higher even than here, though highest was here thy place,
Love sees thy spirit laugh and speak and shine
With Shakespeare and the soft bright soul of Sterne
And Fielding's kindliest might and Goldsmith's grace;
Scarce one more loved or worthier love than thine.

ON LAMB'S SPECIMENS OF DRAMATIC POETS.

I.

If all the flowers of all the fields on earth
By wonder-working summer were made one,
Its fragrance were not sweeter in the sun,
Its treasure-house of leaves were not more worth
Than those wherefrom thy light of musing mirth
Shone, till each leaf whereon thy pen would run
Breathed life, and all its breath was benison.
Beloved beyond all names of English birth,
More dear than mightier memories; gentlest name
That ever clothed itself with flower-sweet fame,
Or linked itself with loftiest names of old
By right and might of loving; I, that am
Less than the least of those within thy fold,
Give only thanks for them to thee, Charles Lamb.

II.

So many a year had borne its own bright bees
And slain them since thy honey-bees were hived,
John Day, in cells of flower-sweet verse contrived
So well with craft of moulding melodies,
Thy soul perchance in amaranth fields at ease
Thought not to hear the sound on earth revived
Of summer music from the spring derived
When thy song sucked the flower of flowering trees.
But thine was not the chance of every day:
Time, after many a darkling hour, grew sunny,
And light between the clouds ere sunset swam,
Laughing, and kissed their darkness all away,
When, touched and tasted and approved, thy honey
Took subtler sweetness from the lips of Lamb.

TO JOHN NICHOL.

I.

Friend of the dead, and friend of all my days
Even since they cast off boyhood. I salute
The song saluting friends whose songs are mute
With full burnt-offerings of clear-spirited praise.
That since our old young years our several ways
Have led through fields diverse of flower and fruit
Yet no cross wind has once relaxed the root
We set long since beneath the sundawn's rays,
The root of trust whence towered the trusty tree,
Friendship—this only and duly might impel
My song to salutation of your own;
More even than praise of one unseen of me
And loved—the starry spirit of Dobell,
To mine by light and music only known.

II.

But more than this what moves me most of all
To leave not all unworded and unsped
The whole heart's greeting of my thanks unsaid
Scarce needs this sign, that from my tongue should fall
His name whom sorrow and reverent love recall,
The sign to friends on earth of that dear head
Alive, which now long since untimely dead
The wan gray waters covered for a pall.
Their trustless reaches dense with tangling stems
Took never life more taintless of rebuke,
More pure and perfect, more serene and kind,
Than when those clear eyes closed beneath the Thames,
And made the now more hallowed name of Luke
Memorial to us of morning left behind.

DYSTHANATOS.

Ad generem Cereris sine cæde et vulnere pauci
Descendunt reges, aut siccâ morte tyranni.

By no dry death another king goes down
The way of kings. Yet may no free man's voice,
For stern compassion and deep awe, rejoice
That one sign more is given against the crown,
That one more head those dark red waters drown
Which rise round thrones whose trembling equipoise
Is propped on sand and bloodshed and such toys
As human hearts that shrink at human frown.
The name writ red on Polish earth, the star
That was to outshine our England's in the far
East heaven of empire—where is one that saith
Proud words now, prophesying of this White Czar?
'In bloodless pangs few kings yield up their breath.
Few tyrants perish by no violent death.'

EUONYMOS.

εὖ μὴν ἢ τιμὴν ἐδίδου νικηφόρος ἀλκὴ
ἐκ νίκης ὄνομ' ἔσχε φόβου κέαρ αἰὲν ἀθικτος.

A YEAR ago red wrath and keen despair
Spake, and the sole word from their darkness sent
Laid low the lord not all omnipotent
Who stood most like a god of all that were
As gods for pride of power, till fire and air
Made earth of all his godhead. Lightning rent
The heart of empire's lurid firmament,
And laid the mortal core of manhood bare.
But when the calm crowned head that all revere
For valor higher than that which casts out fear,
Since fear came near it never, comes near death,
Blind murder cowers before it, knowing that here
No braver soul drew bright and queenly breath
Since England wept upon Elizabeth.

ON THE RUSSIAN PERSECUTION OF THE JEWS.

O SON of man, by lying tongues adored,
By slaughterous hands of slaves with feet red-shod
In carnage deep as ever Christian trod
Profaned with prayer and sacrifice abhorred
And incense from the trembling tyrant's horde,
Brute worshippers or wielders of the rod,
Most murderous even of all that call thee God,
Most treacherous even that ever called thee Lord;
Face loved of little children long ago,
Head hated of the priests and rulers then,
If thou see this, or hear these hounds of thine
Run ravening as the Gadarean swine,
Say, was not this thy Passion, to foreknow
In death's worst hour the works of Christian men?

BISMARCK AT CANOSSA.

NOT all disgraced, in that Italian town,
The imperial German cowered beneath thine hand,
Alone indeed imperial Hildebrand,
And felt thy foot and Rome's, and felt her frown
And thine, more strong and sovereign than his crown,
Though iron forged its blood-encrusted band.
But now the princely wielder of his land,
For hatred's sake toward freedom, so bows down,
No strength is in the foot to spurn: its tread
Can bruise not now the proud submitted head:
But how much more abased, much lower brought low,
And more intolerably humiliated,
The neck submissive of the prosperous foe,
Than his whom scorn saw shuddering in the snow!

QUIA NOMINOR LEO.

I.

WHAT part is left thee, lion? Ravenous beast,
Which hadst the world for pasture, and for scope

And compass of thine homicidal hope
The kingdom of the spirit of man, the feast
Of souls subdued from west to sunless east,
From blackening north to bloodred south aslope,
All servile ; earth for footcloth of the pope,
And heaven for chancel-ceiling of the priest ;
Thou that hadst earth by right of rack and rod,
Thou that hadst Rome because thy name was God,
And by thy creed's gift heaven wherein to dwell ;
Heaven laughs with all his light and might above
That earth has cast thee out of faith and love ;
Thy part is but the hollow dream of hell.

II.

The light of life has faded from thy cause,
High priest of heaven and hell and purgatory :
Thy lips are loud with strains of oldworld story,
But the red prey was rent out of thy paws
Long since : and they that dying brake down thy laws
Have with the fires of death-enkindled glory
Put out the flame that faltered on thy hoary
High altars, waning with the world's applause.
This Italy was Dante's : Bruno died
Here : Campanella, too sublime for pride,
Endured thy God's worst here, and hence went home.
And what art thou, that time's full tide should shrink
For thy sake downward? What art thou, to think
Thy God shall give thee back for birthright Rome ?

THE CHANNEL TUNNEL.

NOT for less love, all glorious France, to thee,
'Sweet enemy' called in days long since at end,
Now found and hailed of England sweeter friend,
Bright sister of our freedom now, being free ;
Not for less love or faith in friendship we
Whose love burnt ever toward thee reprehend
The vile vain greed whose pursy dreams portend
Between our shores suppression of the sea.
Not by dull toil of blind mechanic art
Shall these be linked for no man's force to part
Nor length of years and changes to divide,
But union only of trust and loving heart
And perfect faith in freedom strong to abide
And spirit at one with spirit on either side.

SIR WILLIAM GOMM.

I.

AT threescore years and five aroused anew
To rule in India, forth a soldier went
On whose bright-fronted youth fierce war had spent
Its iron stress of storm, till glory grew
Full as the red sun waned on Waterloo.
Landing, he met the word from England sent
Which bade him yield up rule: and he, content,
Resigned it, as a mightier warrior's due;
And wrote as one rejoicing to record
That 'from the first' his royal heart was lord
Of its own pride or pain; that thought was none
Therein save this, that in her perilous strait
England, whose womb brings forth her sons so great,
Should choose to serve her first her mightiest son.

II.

Glory beyond all flight of warlike fame
Go with the warrior's memory who preferred
To praise of men whereby men's hearts are stirred,
And acclamation of his own proud name
With blare of trumpet-blasts and sound and flame
Of pageant honor, and the titular word
That only wins men worship of the herd,
His country's sovereign good; who overcame
Pride, wrath, and hope of all high chance on earth,
For this land's love that gave his great heart birth.
O nursling of the sea-winds and the sea,
Immortal England, goddess ocean-born,
What shall thy children fear, what strengths not scorn,
While children of such mould are born to thee?

EUTHANATOS.

In memory of Mrs. Thellusson.

Forth of our ways and woes,
Forth of the winds and snows,
A white soul soaring goes,
Winged like a dove:
So sweet, so pure, so clear,
So heavenly tempered here.
Love need not hope or fear her changed above:

Ere dawned her day to die,
So heavenly, that on high
Change could not glorify
Nor death refine her:
Pure gold of perfect love,
On earth like heaven's own dove,
She cannot wear, above, a smile diviner.

Her voice in heaven's own quire
Can sound no heavenlier lyre
Than here: no purer fire
Her soul can soar:
No sweeter stars her eyes
In unimagined skies
Beyond our sight can rise than here before.

Hardly long years had shed
Their shadows on her head:
Hardly we think her dead,
Who hardly thought her
Old: hardly can believe
The grief our hearts receive
And wonder while they grieve, as wrong were wrought her.

But though strong grief be strong
No word or thought of wrong
May stain the trembling song,
Wring the bruised heart,
That sounds or sighs its faint
Low note of love, nor taint
Grief for so sweet a saint, when such depart.

A saint whose perfect soul,
With perfect love for goal,
Faith hardly might control,
Creeds might not harden:
A flower more splendid far
Than the most radiant star
Seen here of all that are in God's own garden.

Surely the stars we see
Rise and relapse as we,
And change and set, may be
But shadows too.
But spirits that man's lot
Could neither mar nor spot
Like these false lights are not, being heavenly true.

Not like these dying lights
Of worlds whose glory smites
The passage of the nights
Through heaven's blind prison:
Not like their souls who see,
If thought fly far and free,
No heavenlier heaven to be for souls rerisen.

A soul wherein love shone
Even like the sun, alone,
With fervor of its own
And splendor fed,
Made by no creeds less kind
Toward souls by none confined,
Could Death's self quench or blind, Love's self were dead.

FIRST AND LAST.

Upon the borderlands of being,
Where life draws hardly breath
Between the lights and shadows fleeing
Fast as a word one saith,
Two flowers rejoice our eyesight, seeing
The dawns of birth and death.

Behind the babe his dawn is lying
Half risen with notes of mirth
From all the winds about it flying
Through new-born heaven and earth.
Before bright age his day for dying
Dawns equal-eyed with birth.

Equal the dews of even and dawn,
Equal the sun's eye seen
A hand's breadth risen and half withdrawn
But no bright hour between
Brings aught so bright by stream or lawn
To noonday growths of green.

Which flower of life may smell the sweeter
To love's insensual sense,
Which fragrance move with offering meeter
His soothed omnipotence,
Being chosen as fairer or as fleeter,
Borne hither or borne hence,

Love's foiled omniscience knows not: this
Where more than all he knows

With all his lore of bale and bliss,
The choice of rose and rose,
One red as lips that touch with his,
One white as moonlit snows.

No hope is half so sweet and good,
No dream of saint or sage
So fair as these are: no dark mood
But these might best assuage;
The sweet red rose of babyhood,
The white sweet rose of age.

LINES ON THE DEATH OF EDWARD JOHN TRELAWNY.

LAST high star of the years whose thunder
Still men's listening remembrance hears,
Last light left of our fathers' years,
Watched with honor and hailed with wonder
Thee too then have the years borne under,
Thou too then hast regained thy peers.

Wings that warred with the winds of morning,
Storm-winds rocking the red great dawn,
Close at last, and a film is drawn
Over the eyes of the storm-bird, scorning
Now no longer the loud wind's warning,
Waves that threaten or waves that fawn.

Peers were none of thee left us living,
Peers of theirs we shall see no more.
Eight years over the full fourscore
Knew thee: now shalt thou sleep, forgiving
All griefs past of the wild world's giving,
Moored at last on the stormless shore.

Worldwide liberty's lifelong lover,
Lover no less of the strength of song,
Sea-king, swordsman, hater of wrong,
Over thy dust that the dust shall cover
Comes my song as a bird to hover,
Borne of its will as of wings along

Cherished of thee were this brief song's brothers
Now that follows them, cherishing thee.
Over the tides and the tideless sea
Soft as a smile of the earth our mother's
Flies it faster than all those others,
First of the troop at thy tomb to be.

Memories of Greece and the mountain's hollow
Guarded alone of thy loyal sword
Hold thy name for our hearts in ward:
Yet more fain are our hearts to follow
One way now with the southward swallow
Back to the grave of the man their lord

Heart of hearts, art thou moved not, hearing
Surely, if hearts of the dead may hear,
Whose true heart it is now draws near?
Surely the sense of it thrills thee, cheering
Darkness and death with the news now nearing—
Shelley, Trelawny rejoins thee here

ADIEUX À MARIE STUART.

I.

QUEEN, for whose house my fathers fought,
With hopes that rose and fell,
Red star of boyhood's fiery thought.
Farewell.

They gave their lives, and I, my queen,
Have given you of my life,
Seeing your brave star burn high between
Men's strife.

The strife that lightened round their spears
Long since fell still: so long
Hardly may hope to last in years
My song.

But still through strife of time and thought
Your light on me too fell:
Queen, in whose name we sang or fought,
Farewell.

II.

There beats no heart on either border
Wherethrough the north blasts blow
But keeps your memory as a warder
His beacon-fire aglow.

Long since it fired with love and wonder
Mine, for whose April age
Blithe midsummer made banquet under
The shade of Hermitage.

Soft sang the burn's blithe notes, that gather
Strength to ring true:
And air and trees and sun and heather
Remembered you.

Old border ghosts of fight or fairy
Or love or teen,

These they forgot, remembering Mary
The Queen.

III.

Queen once of Scots and ever of ours
Whose sires brought forth for you
Their lives to strew your way like flowers,
Adieu.

Dead is full many a dead man's name
Who died for you this long
Time past: shall this too fare the same,
My song?

But surely, though it die or live,
Your face was worth
All that a man may think to give
On earth.

No darkness cast of years between
Can darken you:
Man's love will never bid my queen
Adieu.

IV.

Love hangs like light about your name
As music round the shell:
No heart can take of you a tame
Farewell.

Yet, when your very face was seen,
Ill gifts were yours for giving:
Love gat strange guerdons of my queen
When living.

O diamond heart unflawed and clear,
The whole world's crowning jewel!
Was ever heart so deadly dear
So cruel?

Yet none for you of all that bled
Grudged once one drop that fell:
Not one to life reluctant said
Farewell.

V.

Strange love they have given you, love disloyal,
Who mock with praise your name,
To leave a head so rare and royal
Too low for praise or blame.

You could not love nor hate, they tell us
You had nor sense nor sting:
In God's name, then, what plague befell us
To fight for such a thing?

'Some faults the gods will give,' to fetter
Man's highest intent:
But surely you were something better
Than innocent!

No maid that strays with steps unwary
Through snares unseen,
But one to live and die for; Mary,
The Queen.

VI.

Forgive them all their praise, who blot
Your fame with praise of you:
Then love may say, and falter not,
Adieu.

Yet some you hardly would forgive
Who did you much less wrong
Once; but resentment should not live
Too long.

They never saw your lip's bright bow,
Your swordbright eyes,
The bluest of heavenly things below
The skies.

Clear eyes that love's self finds most like
A swordblade's blue,
A swordblade's ever keen to strike,
Adieu.

VII.

Though all things breathe or sound of fight
That yet make up your spell,
To bid you were to bid the light
Farewell.

Farewell the song says only, being
A star whose race is run:
Farewell the soul says never, seeing
The sun.

Yet, wellnigh as with flash of tears,
The song must say but so
That took your praise up twenty years
Ago.

More bright than stars or moons that vary,
Sun kindling heaven and hell,
Here, after all these years, Queen Mary,
Farewell.

HERSE.

WHEN grace is given us ever to behold
A child some sweet months old,
Love, laying across our lips his finger, saith,
Smiling, with bated breath,

Hush! for the holiest thing that lives is here,
And heaven's own heart how near!
How dare we, that may gaze not on the sun,
Gaze on this verier one?
Heart, hold thy peace; eyes, be cast down for shame;
Lips, breathe not yet its name.
In heaven they know what name to call it; we,
How should we know? For, see!
The adorable sweet living marvellous
Strange light that lightens us
Who gaze, desertless of such glorious grace,
Full in a babe's warm face!
All roses that the morning rears are nought,
All stars not worth a thought,
Set this one star against them, or suppose
As rival this one rose.
What price could pay with earth's whole weight of gold
One least flushed roseleaf's fold
Of all this dimpling store of smiles that shine
From each warm curve and line,
Each charm of flower-sweet flesh, to reillume
The dappled rose-red bloom
Of all its dainty body, honey-sweet
Clenched hands and curled-up feet,
That on the roses of the dawn have trod
As they came down from God,
And keep the flush and color that the sky
Takes when the sun comes nigh,
And keep the likeness of the smile their grace
Evoked on God's own face
When, seeing this work of his most heavenly mood,
He saw that it was good?
For all its warm sweet body seems one smile,
And mere men's love too vile
To meet it, or with eyes that worship dims
Read o'er the little limbs,
Read all the book of all their beauties o'er,
Rejoice, revere, adore,
Bow down and worship each delight in turn,
Laugh, wonder, yield, and yearn.
But when our trembling kisses dare, yet dread,
Even to draw nigh its head,
And touch, and scarce with touch or breath surprise
Its mild miraculous eyes
Out of their viewless vision—O, what then,
What may be said of men?
What speech may name a new-born child? what word
Earth ever spake or heard?
The best men's tongue that ever glory knew
Called that a drop of dew
Which from the breathing creature's kindly womb
Came forth in blameless bloom.
We have no word, as had those men most high,
To call a baby by.
Rose, ruby, lily, pearl of stormless seas—
A better word than these,
A better sign it was than flower or gem
That love revealed to them:
They knew that whence comes light of quickening flame,
Thence only this thing came,
And only might be likened of our love
To somewhat born above,
Not even to sweetest things dropped else on earth,
Only to dew's own birth.
Nor doubt we but their sense was heavenly true,
Babe, when we gaze on you,
A dew-drop out of heaven whose colors are
More bright than sun or star,
As now, ere watching love dare fear or hope,
Lips, hands, and eyelids ope,
And all your life is mixed with earthly leaven.
O child, what news from heaven?

TWINS.

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED TO W. M. R. AND L. R.

APRIL, on whose wings
Ride all gracious things,
Like the star that brings
All things good to man,
Ere his light, that yet
Makes the month shine, set,
And fair May forget
Whence her birth began,

Brings, as heart would choose,
Sound of golden news,
Bright as kindling dews
When the dawn begins;
Tidings clear as mirth,
Sweet as air and earth
Now that hail the birth,
Twice thus blest, of twins.

In the lovely land
Where with hand in hand
Lovers wedded stand
Other joys before
Made your mixed life sweet:
Now, as Time sees meet,

Three glad blossoms greet
  Two glad blossoms more.

Fed with sun and dew,
While your joys were new,
First arose and grew
  One bright olive-shoot:
Then a fair and fine
Slip of warm-haired pine
Felt the sweet sun shine
  On its leaf and fruit.

And it wore for mark
Graven on the dark
Beauty of its bark
  That the noblest name
Worn in song of old
By the king whose bold
Hand had fast in hold
  All the flower of fame.

Then, with southern skies
Flattered in her eyes,
Which, in lovelier wise
  Yet, reflect their blue
Brightened more, being bright
Here with life's delight,
And with love's live light
  Glorified anew,

Came, as fair as came
One who bore her name
(She that broke as flame
  From the swan-shell white),
Crowned with tender hair
Only, but more fair
Than all queens that were
  Themes of oldworld fight,

Of your flowers the third
Bud, or new-fledged bird
In your hearts' nest heard
  Murmuring like a dove
Bright as those that drew
Over waves where blew
No loud wind the blue
  Heaven-hued car of love.

Not the glorious grace
Even of that one face
Potent to displace
  All the towers of Troy
Surely shone more clear
Once with childlike cheer
Than this child's face here
  Now with living joy.

After these again
Here in April's train
Breaks the bloom of twain
  Blossoms in one birth
For a crown of May
On the front of day
When he takes his way
  Over heaven and earth.

Half a heavenly thing
Given from heaven to Spring
By the sun her king,
  Half a tender toy,
Seems a child of curl
Yet too soft to twirl;
Seems the flower-sweet girl
  By the flower-bright boy.

All the kind gods' grace,
All their love, embrace
Ever either face,
  Ever brood above them:
All sort wings of hours
Screen them as with flowers
From all beams and showers:
  All life's seasons love them.

When the dews of sleep
  Falling lightliest keep
Eyes too close to peep
Forth and laugh off rest,
Joy from face to feet
Fill them, as is meet:
Life to them be sweet
  As their mother's breast.

When those dews are dry,
And in day's bright eye
Looking full they lie
  Bright as rose and pearl,
All returns of joy
Pure of time's alloy
Bless the rose-red boy,
  Guard the rose-white girl.

POSTCRIPT.

Friends, if I could take
Half a note from Blake
Or but one verse make
  Of the Conqueror's mine,
Better than my best
Song above your nest
I would sing: the quest
  Now seems too divine.

THE SALT OF THE EARTH.

If childhood were not in the world,
But only men and women grown;
No baby-locks in tendrils curled,
No baby-blossoms blown;

Though men were stronger, women fairer,
And nearer all delights in reach,
And verse and music uttered rarer
Tones of more godlike speech;

Though the utmost life of life's best hours
Found, as it cannot now find, words;
Though desert sands were sweet as flowers
And flowers could sing like birds,

But children never heard them, never
They felt a child's foot leap and run:
This were a drearier star than ever
Yet looked upon the sun.

SEVEN YEARS OLD.

I.

Seven white roses on one tree,
Seven white loaves of blameless leaven,
Seven white sails on one soft sea,
Seven white swans on one lake's lee,
Seven white flowerlike stars in heaven,
All are types unmeet to be
For a birthday's crown of seven.

II.

Not the radiance of the roses,
Not the blessing of the bread,
Not the breeze that ere day grows is
Fresh for sails and swans, and closes
Wings above the sun's grave spread,
When the starshine on the snows is
Sweet as sleep on sorrow shed.

III.

Nothing sweetest, nothing best,
Holds so good and sweet a treasure
As the love wherewith once blest
Joy grows holy, grief takes rest,
Life, half tired with hours to measure,
Fills his eyes and lips and breast
With most light and breath of pleasure;

IV.

As the rapture unpolluted,
As the passion undefiled,
By whose force all pains heart-rooted
Are transfigured and transmuted,
Recompensed and reconciled,
Through the imperial, undisputed,
Present godhead of a child.

V.

Brown bright eyes and fair bright head,
Worth a worthier crown than this is,
Worth a worthier song instead,
Sweet grave wise round mouth, full fed
With the joy of love, whose bliss is
More than mortal wine and bread,
Lips whose words are sweet as kisses,

VI.

Little hands so glad of giving,
Little heart so glad of love,
Little soul so glad of living,
While the strong swift hours are weaving
Light with darkness woven above,
Time for mirth and time for grieving,
Plume of raven and plume of dove,

VII.

I can give you but a word
Warm with love therein for leaven,
But a song that falls unheard
Yet on ears of sense unstirred
Yet by song so far from heaven,
Whence you came the brightest bird,
Seven years since, of seven times seven.

EIGHT YEARS OLD.

I.

Sun, whom the faltering snow-cloud fears
Rise, let the time of year be May,
Speak now the word that April hears,
Let March have all his royal way;
Bid all spring raise in winter's ears
All tunes her children hear or play,
Because the crown of eight glad years
On one bright head is set to-day.

II.

What matters cloud or sun to-day
To him who wears the wreath of years
So many, and all like flowers at play
With wind and sunshine, while his ears
Hear only song on every way?
More sweet than spring triumphant hears
Ring through the revel-rout of May
Are these, the notes that winter fears.

III.

Strong-hearted winter knows and fears
The music made of love at play,
Or haply loves the tune he hears
From hearts fulfilled with flowering May,
Whose molten music thaws his ears
Late frozen, deaf but yesterday
To sounds of dying and dawning years,
Now quickened on his deathward way.

IV.

For deathward now lies winter's way
Down the green vestibule of years
That each year brightens day by day
With flower and shower till hope scarce fears
And fear grows wholly hope of May.
But we—the music in our ears
Made of love's pulses as they play
The heart alone that makes it hears.

V.

The heart it is that plays and hears
High salutation of to-day.
Tongue falters, hand shrinks back, song fears
Its own unworthiness to play
Fit music for those eight sweet years.
Or sing their blithe accomplished way.
No song quite worth a young child's ears
Broke ever even from birds in May.

VI.

There beats not in the heart of May,
When summer hopes and springtide fears,
There falls not from the height of day,
When sunlight speaks and silence hears,
So sweet a psalm as children play
And sing, each hour of all their years,
Each moment of their lovely way,
And know not how it thrills our ears.

VII.

Ah child, what are we, that our ears
Should hear you singing on your way,
Should have this happiness? The years
Whose hurrying wings about us play
Are not like yours, whose flower-time fears
Nought worse than sunlit showers in May,
Being sinless as the spring, that hears
Her own heart praise her every day.

VIII.

Yet we too triumph in the day
That bare, to entrance our eyes and ears,
To lighten daylight, and to play
Such notes as darkness knows and fears,
The child whose face illumes our way,
Whose voice lifts up the heart that hears
Whose hand is as the hand of May
To bring us flowers from eight full years.

COMPARISONS.

CHILD, when they say that others
Have been or are like you,
Babes fit to be your brothers,
Sweet human drops of dew,
Bright fruit of mortal mothers,
What should one say or do?

We know the thought is treason,
We feel the dream absurd;
A claim rebuked of reason,
That withers at a word:
For never shone the season
That bore so blithe a bird.

Some smiles may seem as merry,
Some glances gleam as wise,
From lips as like a cherry
And scarce less gracious eyes;
Eyes browner than a berry,
Lips red as morning's rise.

But never yet rang laughter
So sweet in gladdened ears
Through wall and floor and rafter
As all this household hears
And rings response thereafter
Till cloudiest weather clears.

When those your chosen of all men,
Whose honey never cloys,
Two lights whose smiles enthrall me,
Were called at your age boys,
Those mighty men, while small men,
Could make no merrier noise.

Our Shakespeare, surely, daffed not
More lightly pain aside
From radiant lips that quaffed not
Of forethought's tragic tide:
Our Dickens, doubtless, laughed not
More loud with life's first pride.

The dawn were not more cheerless
With neither light nor dew
Than we without the fearless
Clear laugh that thrills us through
If ever child stood peerless,
Love knows that child is you.

WHAT IS DEATH?

LOOKING on a page where stood
Graven of old on old-world wood
Death, and by the grave's edge grim,
Pale, the young man facing him,
Asked my well-beloved of me
Once what strange thing this might be,
Gaunt and great of limb.

Death, I told him: and, surprise
Deepening more his wildwood eyes
(Like some sweet fleet thing's whose breath
Speaks all spring though nought it saith),
Up he turned his rosebright face
Glorious with its seven years' grace,
Asking—What is death?

A CHILD'S PITY.

No sweeter thing than children's ways and wiles,
Surely, we say, can gladden eyes and ears:
Yet sometime sweeter than their words or smiles
Are even their tears.

To one for once a piteous tale was read,
How, when the murderous mother crocodile
Was slain, her fierce brood famished, and lay dead,
Starved, by the Nile.

In vast green reed-beds on the vast gray slime
Those monsters motherless and helpless lay,
Perishing only for the parent's crime
Whose seed were they.

Hours after, toward the dusk, our blithe small bird
Of Paradise, who has our hearts in keeping,
Was heard or seen, but hardly seen or heard,
For pity weeping.

He was so sorry, sitting still apart,
For the poor little crocodiles, he said.
Six years had given him, for an angel's heart,
A child's instead.

Feigned tears the false beast shed for murderous ends,
We know from travellers' tales of crocodiles:
But these tears wept upon them of my friend's
Outshine his smiles.

What heavenliest angels of what heavenly city
Could match the heavenly heart in children here?
The heart that hallowing all things with its pity
Casts out all fear?

So lovely, so divine, so dear their laughter
Seems to us, we know not what could be more dear:
But lovelier yet we see the sign thereafter
Of such a tear.

With sense of love half laughing and half weeping
We met your tears, our small sweet-spirited friend:
Let your love have us in its heavenly keeping
To life's last end.

A CHILD'S LAUGHTER.

ALL the bells of heaven may ring,
All the birds of heaven may sing,
All the wells on earth may spring,
All the winds on earth may bring
All sweet sounds together;
Sweeter far than all things heard,
Hand of harper, tone of bird,
Sound of woods at sundawn stirred,
Welling water's winsome word,
Wind in warm wan weather,

One thing yet there is, that none
Hearing ere its chime be done
Knows not well the sweetest one
Heard of man beneath the sun,
Hoped in heaven hereafter;
Soft and strong and loud and light,
Very sound of very light
Heard from morning's rosiest height,
When the soul of all delight
Fills a child's clear laughter.

Golden bells of welcome rolled
Never forth such notes, nor told
Hours so blithe in tones so bold,
As the radiant mouth of gold
Here that rings forth heaven.
If the golden-crested wren
Were a nightingale—why, then,

Something seen and heard of men
Might be half as sweet as when
Laughs a child of seven.

A CHILD'S THANKS.

How low soe'er men rank us,
How high soe'er we win,
The children far above us
Dwell, and they deign to love us,
With lovelier love than ours,
And smiles more sweet than flowers ;
As though the sun should thank us
For letting light come in.

With too divine complaisance,
Whose grace misleads them thus,
Being gods, in heavenly blindness
They call our worship kindness,
Our pebble-gift a gem :
They think us good to them,
Whose glance, whose breath, whose presence,
Are gifts too good for us.

The poet high and hoary
Of meres that mountains bind
Felt his great heart more often
Yearn, and its proud strength soften
From stern to tenderer mood,
At thought of gratitude
Shown than of song or story
He heard of hearts unkind.

But with what words for token
And what adoring tears
Of reverence risen to passion,
In what glad prostrate fashion
Of spirit and soul subdued,
May man show gratitude
For thanks of children spoken
That hover in his ears?

The angels laugh, your brothers,
Child, hearing you thank me,
With eyes whence night grows sunny,
And touch of lips like honey,
And words like honey-dew:
But how shall I thank you?
For gifts above all others
What guerdon-gift may be?

What wealth of words caressing,
What choice of songs found best,
Would seem not as derision,
Found vain beside the vision
And glory from above
Shown in a child's heart's love?
His part in life is blessing;
Ours, only to be blest.

A CHILD'S BATTLES.

πῦξ ἀρετὰν εὑρών.—PINDAR.

PRAISE of the knights of old
May sleep: their tale is told,
And no man cares:
The praise which fires our lips is
A knight's whose fame eclipses
All of theirs.

The ruddiest light in heaven
Blazed as his birth-star seven
Long years ago:
All glory crown that old year
Which brought our stout small soldier
With the snow!

Each baby born has one
Star, for his friends a sun,
The first of stars:
And we, the more we scan it,
The more grow sure your planet,
Child, was Mars.

For each one flower, perchance,
Blooms as his cognizance :
The snowdrop chill,
The violet unbeholden,
For some: for you the golden
Daffodil.

Erect, a fighting flower,
It breasts the breeziest hour
That ever blew.
And bent or broke things brittle
Or frail, unlike a little
Knight like you.

Its flower is firm and fresh
And stout like sturdiest flesh
Of children: all
The strenuous blast that parches
Spring hurts it not till March is
Near his fall.

If winds that prate and fret
Remark, rebuke, regret,
Lament, or blame
The brave plant's martial passion,
It keeps its own free fashion
All the same.

We that would fain seem wise
Assume grave mouths and eyes
Whose looks reprove
Too much delight in battle:
But your great heart our prattle
Cannot move.

We say, small children should
Be placid, mildly good
And blandly meek:
Whereat the broad smile rushes
Full on your lips, and flushes
All your cheek.

If all the stars that are
Laughed out, and every star
Could here be heard,
Such peals of golden laughter
We should not hear, as after
Such a word.

For all the storm saith, still,
Stout stands the daffodil:
For all we say,
Howe'er he look demurely,
Our martialist will surely
Have his way.

We may not bind with bands
Those large and liberal hands,
Nor stay from fight,
Nor hold them back from giving:
No lean mean laws of living
Bind a knight.

And always here of old
Such gentle hearts and bold
Our land has bred:
How durst her eye rest else on
The glory shed from Nelson
Quick and dead?

Shame were it, if but one
Such once were born her son,
That one to have borne,
And brought him ne'er a brother:
His praise should bring his mother
Shame and scorn.

A child high-souled as he
Whose manhood shook the sea
Smiles haply here:
His face, where love lies basking,
With bright shut mouth seems asking,
What is fear?

The sunshine-colored fists
Beyond his dimpling wrists
Were never closed
For saving or for sparing—
For only deeds of daring
Predisposed.

Unclenched, the gracious hands
Let slip their gifts like sands
Made rich with ore
That tongues of beggars ravish
From small stout hands so lavish
Of their store.

Sweet hardy kindly hands
Like these were his that stands
With heel on gorge
Seen trampling down the dragon
On sign or flask or flagon,
Sweet Saint George.

Some tournament, perchance,
Of hands that couch no lance,
Might mark this spot
Your lists, if here some pleasant
Small Guenevere were present,
Launcelot.

My brave bright flower, you need
No foolish song, nor heed
It more than spring
The sighs of winter stricken
Dead when your haunts requicken
Here, my king.

Yet O, how hardly may
The wheels of singing stay
That whirl along
Bright paths whence echo raises
The phantom of your praises,
Child, my song!

Beyond all other things
That give my words fleet wings,
Fleet wings and strong,
You set their jesses ringing
Till hardly can I, singing,
Stint my song.

But all things better, friend,
And worse must find an end:
And, right or wrong,
'Tis time, lest rhyme should baffle,
I doubt to put a snaffle
On my song.

And never may your ear
Aught harsher hear or fear,
Nor wolfish night
Nor dog-toothed winter snarling
Behind your steps, my darling,
My delight!

For all the gifts you give
Me, dear, each day you live,
Of thanks above
All thanks that could be spoken
Take not my song in token,
Take my love.

A CHILD'S FUTURE.

WHAT will it please you, my darling, hereafter to be?
Fame upon land will you look for, or glory by sea?
Gallant your life will be always, and all of it free.
Free as the wind when the heart of the twilight is stirred
Eastward, and sounds from the springs of the sunrise are heard:
Free—and we know not another as infinite word.

Darkness or twilight or sunlight may compass us round,
Hate may arise up against us, or hope may confound;
Love may forsake us; yet may not the spirit be bound.

Free in oppression of grief as in ardor of joy
Still may the soul be, and each to her strength as a toy:
Free in the glance of the man as the smile of the boy.
Freedom alone is the salt and the spirit that gives
Life, and without her is nothing that verily lives:
Death cannot slay her: she laughs upon death and forgives.

Brightest and hardiest of roses anear and afar
Glitters the blithe little face of you, round as a star:
Liberty bless you and keep you to be as you are.

England and liberty bless you and keep you to be
Worthy the name of their child and the sight of their sea:
Fear not at all; for a slave, if he fears not, is free.

SONNETS

ON ENGLISH DRAMATIC POETS.—(1590–1650.)

I.

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE.

ROWNED, girdled, garbed and shod with light and fire,
Son first-born of the morning, sovereign star!
Soul nearest ours of all, that wert most far,
Most far off in the abysm of time, thy lyre
Hung highest above the dawn-enkindled quire
Where all ye sang together, all that are,
And all the starry songs behind thy car
Rang sequence, all our souls acclaim thee sire.

'If all the pens that ever poets held
Had fed the feeling of their masters' thoughts,'
And as with rush of hurtling chariots
The flight of all their spirits were impelled
Toward one great end, thy glory—nay, not then,
Not yet might'st thou be praised enough of men.

II.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

NOT if men's tongues and angels' all in one
Spake, might the word be said that might speak Thee.

Streams, winds, woods, flowers, fields, mountains, yea, the sea,
What power is in them all to praise the sun?
His praise is this,—he can be praised of none.
Man, woman, child, praise God for him; but he
Exults not to be worshipped, but to be.
He is; and, being, beholds his work well done.
All joy, all glory, all sorrow, all strength, all mirth,
Are his: without him, day were night on earth.
Time knows not his from time's own period.
All lutes, all harps, all viols, all flutes, all lyres,
Fall dumb before him ere one string suspires.
All stars are angels; but the sun is God.

III.

BEN JONSON.

Broad-based, broad-fronted, bounteous, multiform,
With many a valley impleached with ivy and vine,
Wherein the springs of all the streams run wine,
And many a crag full-faced against the storm,
The mountain where thy Muse's feet made warm
Those lawns that revelled with her dance divine
Shines yet with fire as it was wont to shine
From tossing torches round the dance aswarm.

Nor less, high-stationed on the gray grave heights,
High-thoughted seers with heaven's heart-kindling lights
Hold converse: and the herd of meaner things
Knows or by fiery scourge or fiery shaft
When wrath on thy broad brows has risen, and laughed,
Darkening thy soul with shadow of thunderous wings.

IV.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

An hour ere sudden sunset fired the west,
Arose two stars upon the pale deep east.
The hall of heaven was clear for night's high feast,
Yet was not yet day's fiery heart at rest.
Love leapt up from his mother's burning breast
To see those warm twin lights, as day decreased,
Wax wider, till when all the sun had ceased
As suns they shone from evening's kindled crest.
Across them and between, a quickening fire,
Flamed Venus, laughing with appeased desire.
Their dawn, scarce lovelier for the gleam of tears,
Filled half the hollow shell 'twixt heaven and earth
With sound like moonlight, mingling moan and mirth,
Which rings and glitters down the darkling years.

V.

PHILIP MASSINGER.

Clouds here and there arisen an hour past noon
Checkered our English heaven with lengthening bars
And shadow and sound of wheel-winged thunder-cars
Assembling strength to put forth tempest soon,
When the clear still warm concord of thy tune
Rose under skies unscared by reddening Mars
Yet, like a sound of silver speech of stars,
With full mild flame as of the mellowing moon.
Grave and great-hearted Massinger, thy face
High melancholy lights with loftier grace
Than gilds the brows of revel: sad and wise,
The spirit of thought that moved thy deeper song,
Sorrow serene in soft calm scorn of wrong,
Speaks patience yet from thy majestic eyes.

VI.

JOHN FORD

Hew hard the marble from the mountain's heart
Where hardest night holds fast in iron gloom

Gems brighter than an April dawn in bloom,
That his Memnonian likeness thence may start:
Revealed, whose hand with high funereal art
Carved night, and chiselled shadow : be the tomb
That speaks him famous graven with signs of doom
Intrenched inevitably in lines athwart,
As on some thunder-blasted Titan's brow
His record of rebellion. Not the day
Shall strike forth music from so stern a chord,
Touching this marble : darkness, none knows how,
And stars impenetrable of midnight, may.
So looms the likeness of thy soul, John Ford.

VII.

JOHN WEBSTER.

THUNDER: the flesh quails, and the soul bows down.
Night : east, west, south, and northward, very night.
Star upon struggling star strives into sight,
Star after shuddering star the deep storms drown.
The very throne of night, her very crown,
A man lays hand on, and usurps her right.
Song from the highest of heaven's imperious height
Shoots, as a fire to smite some towering town.
Rage, anguish, harrowing fear, heart-crazing crime,
Make monstrous all the murderous face of Time
Shown in the spheral orbit of a glass
Revolving. Earth cries out from all her graves.
Frail, on frail rafts, across wide-wallowing waves,
Shapes here and there of child and mother pass.

VIII.

THOMAS DECKER.

Out of the depths of darkling life where sin
Laughs piteously that sorrow should not know
Her own ill name, nor woe be counted woe
Where hate and craft and lust make drearier din
Than sounds through dreams that grief holds revel in ;
What charm of joy-bells ringing, streams that flow,
Winds that blow healing in each note they blow,
Is this that the outer darkness hears begin?

O sweetest heart of all thy time save one,
Star seen for love's sake nearest to the sun,
Hung lamplike o'er a dense and doleful city,
Not Shakespeare's very spirit, howe'er more great,
Than thine toward man was more compassionate,
Nor gave Christ praise from lips more sweet with pity.

IX.

THOMAS MIDDLETON.

A wild moon riding high from cloud to cloud,
That sees and sees not, glimmering far beneath,
Hell's children revel along the shuddering heath
With dirge-like mirth and raiment like a shroud :
A worse fair face than witchcraft's, passion-proud,
With brows blood-flecked behind their bridal wreath
And lips that bade the assassin's sword find sheath
Deep in the heart whereto love's heart was vowed :
A game of close contentious crafts and creeds
Played till white England bring black Spain to shame :
A son's bright sword and brighter soul, whose deeds
High conscience lights for mother's love and fame :
Pure gypsy flowers, and poisonous courtly weeds:
Such tokens and such trophies crown thy name.

X.

THOMAS HEYWOOD.

TOM, if they loved thee best who called thee Tom,
What else may all men call thee, seeing thus bright
Even yet the laughing and the weeping light
That still thy kind old eyes are kindled from?
Small care was thine to assail and overcome
Time and his child Oblivion: yet of right
Thy name has part with names of lordlier might
For English love and homely sense of home,
Whose fragrance keeps thy small sweet bay-leaf young
And gives it place aloft among thy peers
Whence many a wreath once higher strong Time has hurled:
And this thy praise is sweet on Shakespeare's tongue—
'O good old man, how well in thee appears
The constant service of the antique world!'

XI.

GEORGE CHAPMAN.

HIGH priest of Homer, not elect in vain,
Deep trumpets blow before thee, shawms behind
Mix music with the rolling wheels that wind
Slow through the laboring triumph of thy train:
Fierce history, molten in thy forging brain,
Takes form and fire and fashion from thy mind,
Tormented and transmuted out of kind:
But howsoe'er thou shift thy strenuous strain,
Like Tailor * smooth, like Fisher † swollen, and now
Grim Yarrington ‡ scarce bloodier marked than thou,
Then bluff as Mayne's § or broad-mouthed Barry's ‖ glee,
Proud still with hoar predominance of brow
And beard like foam swept off the broad blown sea,
Where'er thou go, men's reverence goes with thee.

* Author of *The Hog hath lost his Pearl.*
† Author of *Fuimus Troes, or the True Trojans.*
‡ Author of *Two Tragedies in One.*
§ Author of *The City Match.*
‖ Author of *Ram-Alley, or Merry Tricks.*

XII.

JOHN MARSTON.

THE bitterness of death and bitterer scorn
Breathes from the broad-leafed aloe-plant whence thou
Wast fain to gather for thy bended brow
A chaplet by no gentler forehead worn.
Grief deep as hell, wrath hardly to be borne,
Ploughed up thy soul till round the furrowing plough
The strange black soil foamed, as a black beaked prow
Bids night-black waves foam where its track has torn.
Too faint the phrase for thee that only saith
Scorn bitterer than the bitterness of death
Pervades the sullen splendor of thy soul,
Where hate and pain make war on force and fraud
And all the strengths of tyrants; whence unflawed
It keeps this noble heart of hatred whole.

XIII.

JOHN DAY.

DAY was a full-blown flower in heaven, alive
With murmuring joy of bees and birds aswarm,
When in the skies of song yet flushed and warm
With music where all passion seems to strive
For utterance, all things bright and fierce to drive
Struggling along the splendor of the storm,
Day for an hour put off his fiery form,
And golden murmurs from a golden hive
Across the strong bright summer wind were heard,
And laughter soft as smiles from girls at play
And loud from lips of boys brow-bound with May.
Our mightiest age let fall its gentlest word,

When Song, in semblance of a sweet small bird,
Lit fluttering on the light swift hand of Day.

XIV.

JAMES SHIRLEY.

THE dusk of day's decline was hard on dark
When evening trembled round thy glow-worm lamp
That shone across her shades and dewy damp
A small clear beacon whose benignant spark
Was gracious yet for loiterers' eyes to mark,
Though changed the watchword of our English camp
Since the outposts rang round Marlowe's lion ramp,
When thy steed's pace went ambling round Hyde Park.

And in the thickening twilight under thee
Walks Davenant, pensive in the paths where he,
The blithest throat that ever carolled love
In music made of morning's merriest heart,
Glad Suckling, stumbled from his seat above
And reeled on slippery roads of alien art.

XV.

THE TRIBE OF BENJAMIN.

SONS born of many a loyal Muse to Ben,
All true-begotten, warm with wine or ale,
Bright from the broad light of his presence, Hail!
Prince Randolph, highest his throne of all his men,
Being highest in spirit and heart who hailed him then
King, nor might other spread so blithe a sail:
Cartwright, a soul pent in with narrower pale,
Praised of thy sire for manful might of pen:
Marmion, whose verse keeps alway keen and fine
The perfume of their Apollonian wine
Who shared with that stout sire of all and thee
The exuberant chalice of his echoing shrine:
Is not your praise writ broad in gold which he
Inscribed, that all who praise his name should see?

XVI.

ANONYMOUS PLAYS:

'ARDEN OF FEVERSHAM.'

MOTHER whose womb brought forth our man of men,
Mother of Shakespeare, whom all time acclaims
Queen therefore, sovereign queen of English dames,
Throned higher than sat thy sonless empress then,
Was it thy son's young passion-guided pen
Which drew, reflected from encircling flames,
A figure marked by the earlier of thy names
Wife, and from all her wedded kinswomen
Marked by the sign of murderess? Pale and great,
Great in her grief and sin, but in her death
And anguish of her penitential breath
Greater than all her sin or sin-born fate,
She stands, the holocaust of dark desire,
Clothed round with song forever as with fire.

XVII.

ANONYMOUS PLAYS.

YE too, dim watchfires of some darkling hour,
Whose fame forlorn time saves not nor proclaims
Forever, but forgetfulness defames
And darkness and the shadow of death devour,
Lift up ye too your light, put forth your power,
Let the far twilight feel your soft small flames
And smile, albeit night name not even their names,
Ghost by ghost passing, flower blown down on flower:
That sweet-tongued shadow, like a star's that passed
Singing, and light was from its darkness cast
To paint the face of Painting fair with praise:*
And that wherein forefigured smiles the pure
Fraternal face of Wordsworth's Eldure
Between two child-faced masks of merrier days.†

* *Doctor Dodypol.* † *Nobody and Somebody*

XVIII.

ANONYMOUS PLAYS.

More yet and more, and yet we mark not all:
The Warning fain to bid fair women heed
Its hard brief note of deadly doom and deed; *
The verse that strewed too thick with flowers the hall
Whence Nero watched his fiery festival; †
That iron page wherein men's eyes who read
See bruised and marred between two babes that bleed,
A mad red-handed husband's martyr fall; ‡
The scene which crossed and streaked with mirth the strife
Of Henry with his sons and witchlike wife; §
And that sweet pageant of the kindly fiend,
Who, seeing three friends in spirit and heart made one,
Crowned with good hap the true-love wiles he screened
In the pleached lanes of pleasant Edmonton. ‖

XIX.

THE MANY.

I.

Greene, garlanded with February's few flowers,
Ere March came in with Marlowe's rapturous rage:
Peele, from whose hand the sweet white locks of age
Took the mild chaplet woven of honored hours:
Nash, laughing hard: Lodge, flushed from lyric bowers:
And Lilly, a goldfinch in a twisted cage
Fed by some gay great lady's pettish page
Till short sweet songs gush clear like short spring showers:
Kid, whose grim sport still gambolled over graves:
And Chettle, in whose fresh funereal verse
Weeps Marian yet on Robin's wildwood hearse:
Cooke, whose light boat of song one soft breath saves,
Sighed from a maiden's amorous mouth averse;
Live likewise ye: Time takes not you for slaves.

XX.

THE MANY.

II.

Haughton, whose mirth gave woman all her will;
Field, bright and loud with laughing flower and bird
And keen alternate notes of laud and gird:
Barnes, darkening once with Borgia's deeds the quill
Which tuned the passion of Parthenophil:
Blithe burly Porter, broad and bold of word:
Wilkins, a voice with strenuous pity stirred:
Turk Mason: Brewer, whose tongue drops honey still:
Rough Rowley, handling song with Esau's hand:
Light Nabbes: lean Sharpham, rank and raw by turns,
But fragrant with a forethought once of Burns:
Soft Davenport, sad-robed, but blithe and bland:
Brome, gypsy-led across the woodland ferns:
Praise be with all, and place among our band.

XXI.

EPILOGUE.

Our mother, which wast twice, as history saith,
Found first among the nations: once, when she
Who bore thine ensign saw the God in thee
Smite Spain, and bring forth Shakespeare: once, when death
Shrank, and Rome's bloodhounds cowered, at Milton's breath:
More than thy place, then first among the free,

* *A Warning for fair Women.*
† *The Tragedy of Nero*
‡ *A Yorkshire Tragedy.*
§ *Look about you.*
‖ *The Merry Devil of Edmonton.*

More than that sovereign lordship of the sea
Bequeathed to Cromwell from Elizabeth,
More than thy fiery guiding-star, which Drake
Hailed, and the deep saw lit again for Blake,
More than all deeds wrought of thy strong right hand,
This praise keeps most thy fame's memorial strong,
That thou wast head of all these streams of song,
And time bows down to thee as Shakespeare's land.

A DARK MONTH.

'La maison sans enfants ! '—VICTOR HUGO.

I.

A MONTH without sight of the sun
Rising or reigning or setting
Through days without use of the day,
Who calls it the month of May?
The sense of the name is undone
And the sound of it fit for forgetting.

We shall not feel if the sun rise,
We shall not care when it sets:
If a nightingale make night's air
As noontide, why should we care?
Till a light of delight that is done rise,
Extinguishing gray regrets;

Till a child's face lighten again
On the twilight of older faces;
Till a child's voice fall as the dew
On furrows with heat parched through
And all but hopeless of grain,
Refreshing the desolate places—

Fall clear on the ears of us hearkening
And hungering for food of the sound
And thirsting for joy of his voice:
Till the hearts in us hear and rejoice,
And the thoughts of them doubting and darkening
Rejoice with a glad thing found.

When the heart of our gladness is gone,
What comfort is left with us after?
When the light of our eyes is away,
What glory remains upon May,
What blessing of song is thereon
If we drink not the light of his laughter?

No small sweet face with the daytime
To welcome, warmer than noon!
No sweet small voice as a bird's
To bring us the day's first words!
Mid May for us here is not Maytime
No summer begins with June.

A whole dead month in the dark,
A dawn in the mists that o'ercome he.
Stifled and smothered and sad—
Swift speed to it barren and bad!
And return to us, voice of the lark,
And remain with us, sunlight of summer.

II.

ALAS, what right has the dawn to glimmer,
What right has the wind to do aught but moan?
All the day should be dimmer
Because we are left alone.

Yestermorn like a sunbeam present
Hither and thither a light step smiled,
And made each place for us pleasant
With the sense or the sight of a child.

But the leaves persist as before, and after
Our parting the dull day still bears flowers;
And songs less bright than his laughter
Deride us from birds in the bowers.

Birds, and blossoms, and sunlight only,
As though such folly sufficed for spring!
As though the house were not lonely
For want of the child its king!

III.

ASLEEP and afar to-night my darling
Lies, and heeds not the night.
If winds be stirring or storms be snarling;
For his sleep is its own sweet light.

I sit where he sat beside me quaffing
The wine of story and song
Poured forth of immortal cups, and laughing
When mirth in the draught grew strong.

I broke the gold of the words, to melt it
For hands but seven years old,
And they caught the tale as a bird, and felt it
More bright than visible gold.

And he drank down deep, with his eyes broad beaming,
Here in this room where I am,
The golden vintage of Shakespeare, gleaming
In the silver vessels of Lamb.

Here by my hearth where he was I listen
For the shade of the sound of a word,
Athirst for the birdlike eyes to glisten,
For the tongue to chirp like a bird.

At the blast of battle, how broad they brightened,
Like fire in the spheres of stars,
And clung to the pictured page, and lightened
As keen as the heart of Mars!

At the touch of laughter, how swift it twittered
The shrillest music on earth;
How the lithe limbs laughed and the whole child glittered
With radiant riot of mirth!

Our Shakespeare now, as a man dumb-stricken,
Stands silent there on the shelf:
And my thoughts, that had song in the heart of them, sicken,
And relish not Shakespeare's self.

And my mood grows moodier than Hamlet's even,
And man delights not me,
But only the face that morn and even
My heart leapt only to see.

That my heart made merry within me seeing,
And sang as his laugh kept time:
But song finds now no pleasure in being,
And love no reason in rhyme.

IV.

MILD May-blossom and proud sweet bay-flower,
What, for shame, would you have with us here?
It is not the month of the May-flower
This, but the fall of the year.

Flowers open only their lips in derision,
Leaves are as fingers that point in scorn:
The shows we see are a vision:
Spring is not verily born.

Yet boughs turn supple and buds grow sappy
As though the sun were indeed the sun:
And all our words are happy
With all their birds save one.

But spring is over, but summer is over,
But autumn is over, and winter stands
With his feet sunk deep in the clover
And cowslips cold in his hands.

His hoar grim head has a hawthorn bonnet,
His gnarled gaunt hand has a gay green staff
With new-blown rose-blossom on it:
But his laugh is a dead man's laugh.

The laugh of spring that the heart seeks after
The hand that the whole world yearns to kiss,
It rings not here in his laughter,
The sign of it is not this.

There is not strength in it left to splinter
Tall oaks, nor frost in his breath to sting:
Yet it is but a breath as of winter,
And it is not the hand of spring.

V.

THIRTY-ONE pale maidens, clad
All in mourning dresses,
Pass, with lips and eyes more sad
That it seems they should be glad,
Heads discrowned of crowns they had,
Gray for golden tresses.

Gray their girdles too for green,
And their veils dishevelled:
None would say, to see their mien,
That the least of these had been
Born no baser than a queen,
Reared where flower-fays revelled.

Dreams that strive to seem awake,
Ghosts that walk by daytime,
Weary winds the way they take,
Since, for one child's absent sake,
May knows well, whate'er things make
Sport, it is not Maytime.

VI.

A HAND at the door taps light
As the hand of my heart's delight:
It is but a full-grown hand,
Yet the stroke of it seems to start
Hope like a bird in my heart,
Too feeble to soar or to stand.

To start light hope from her cover
Is to raise but a kite for a plover
If her wings be not fledged to soar.
Desire, but in dreams, cannot ope
The door that was shut upon hope
When love went out at the door.

Well were it if vision could keep
The lids of desire as in sleep
Fast locked, and over his eyes
A dream with the dark soft key
In her hand might hover, and he
Their keeper till morning rise;

The morning that brings after many
Days fled with no light upon any
The small face back which is gone;
When the loved little hands once more
Shall struggle and strain at the door
They beat their summons upon.

VII.

IF a soul for but seven days were cast out of heaven and its mirth,
They would seem to her fears like as seventy years upon earth.

Even and morrow should seem to her sorrow as long
As the passage of numberless ages in slumberless song.

Dawn, roused by the lark, would be surely as dark in her sight
As her measureless measure of shadowless pleasure was bright.

Noon, gilt but with glory of gold, would be hoary and gray
In her eyes that had gazed on the depths, unamazed with the day.

Night hardly would seem to make darker her dream never done,
When it could but withhold what a man may behold of the sun.

For dreams would perplex, were the days that should vex her but seven,
The sight of her vision, made dark with division from heaven.

Till the light on my lonely way lighten that only now gleams,
I too am divided from heaven and derided of dreams.

VIII.

A TWILIGHT fire-fly may suggest
How flames the fire that feeds the sun:
'A crooked figure may attest
In little space a million.'

But this faint-figured verse, that dresses
With flowers the bones of one bare month,
Of all it would say scarce expresses
In crooked ways a millionth.

A fire-fly tenders to the father
Of fires a tribute something worth:
My verse, a shard-borne beetle rather,
Drones over scarce-illumined earth.

Some inches round me though it brighten
With light of music-making thought,
The dark indeed it may not lighten,
The silence moves not, hearing nought.

Only my heart is eased with hearing,
Only mine eyes are soothed with seeing,
A face brought nigh, a footfall nearing,
Till hopes take form and dreams have being.

IX.

As a poor man hungering stands with insatiate eyes and hands
Void of bread
Right in sight of men that feast while his famine with no least
Crumb is fed,

Here across the garden-wall can I hear strange children call,
Watch them play,
From the windowed seat above, whence the goodlier child I love
Is away.

Here the sights we saw together moved his fancy like a feather
To and fro,

Now to wonder, and thereafter to the sunny
storm of laughter
Loud and low—

Sights engraven on storied pages where man's
tale of seven swift ages
All was told—
Seen of eyes yet bright from heaven—for the
lips that laughed were seven
Sweet years old.

X.

WHY should May remember
March, if March forget
The days that began with December,
The nights that a frost could fret?

All their griefs are done with
Now the bright months bless
Fit souls to rejoice in the sun with,
Fit heads for the wind's caress;

Souls of children quickening
With the whole world's mirth,
Heads closelier than field-flowers thickening
That crowd and illuminate earth,

Now that May's call musters
Files of baby bands
To marshal in joyfuller clusters
Than the flowers that encumber their hands.

Yet morose November
Found them no less gay,
With nought to forget or remember
Less bright than a branch of may.

All the seasons moving
Move their minds alike
Applauding, acclaiming, approving
All hours of the year that strike.

So my heart may fret not,
Wondering if my friend
Remember me not or forget not
Or ever the month find end.

Not that love sows lighter
Seed in children sown,
But that life being lit in them brighter
Moves fleeter than even our own.

May nor yet September
Binds their hearts, that yet
Remember, forget, and remember,
Forget, and recall, and forget.

XI.

As light on a lake's face moving
Between a cloud and a cloud
Till night reclaim it, reproving
The heart that exults too loud,

The heart that watching rejoices
When soft it swims into sight
Applauded of all the voices
And stars of the windy night,

So brief and unsure, but sweeter
Than ever a moondawn smiled
Moves, measured of no tune's metre,
The song in the soul of a child;

The song that the sweet soul singing
Half listens, and hardly hears,
Though sweeter than joy-bells ringing
And brighter than joy's own tears;

The song that remembrance of pleasure
Begins, and forgetfulness ends
With a soft swift change in the measure
That rings in remembrance of friends

As the moon on the lake's face flashes,
So haply may gleam at whiles
A dream through the dear deep lashes
Whereunder a child's eye smiles,

And the least of us all that love him
May take for a moment part
With angels around and above him,
And I find place in his heart.

XII.

CHILD, were you kinless and lonely—
Dear, were you kin to me—
My love were compassionate only
Or such as it needs would be.

But eyes of father and mother
Like sunlight shed on you shine:
What need you have heed of another
Such new strange love as is mine?

It is not meet if unruly
Hands take of the children's bread
And cast it to dogs; but truly
The dogs after all would be fed.

On crumbs from the children's table
That crumble, dropped from above
My heart feeds, fed with unstable
Loose waifs of a child's light love.

Though love in your heart were brittle
As glass that breaks with a touch,
You haply would lend him a little
Who surely would give you much.

XIII.

HERE is a rough
Rude sketch of my friend,
Faint-colored enough
And unworthily penned.

Fearlessly fair
And triumphant he stands,
And holds unaware
Friends' hearts in his hands;

Stalwart and straight
As an oak that should bring
Forth gallant and great
Fresh roses in spring.

On the paths of his pleasure
All graces that wait
What metre shall measure,
What rhyme shall relate?

Each action, each motion,
Each feature, each limb,
Demands a devotion
In honor of him:

Head that the hand
Of a god might have blest,
Laid lustrous and bland
On the curve of its crest:

Mouth sweeter than cherries
Keen eyes as of Mars,
Browner than berries
And brighter than stars.

Nor color nor wordy
Weak song can declare
The stature how sturdy,
How stalwart his air.

As a king in his bright
Presence-chamber may be,
So seems he in height—
Twice higher than your knee.

As a warrior sedate
With reserve of his power,
So seems he in state—
As tall as a flower:

As a rose overtowering
The ranks of the rest
That beneath it lie cowering,
Less bright than their best

And his hands are as sunny
As ruddy ripe corn
Or the browner-hued honey
From heather bells borne.

When summer sits proudest,
Fulfilled with its mirth,
And rapture is loudest
In air and on earth,

The suns of all hours
That have ripened the roots
Bring forth not such flowers
And beget not such fruits.

And well though I know it,
As fain would I write,
Child, never a poet
Could praise you aright.

I bless you? the blessing
Were less than a jest
Too poor for expressing;
I come to be blest,

With humble and dutiful
Heart, from above:
Bless me, O my beautiful
Innocent love!

This rhyme in your praise
With a smile was begun;
But the goal of his ways
Is uncovered to none,

Nor pervious till after
The limit impend;
It is not in laughter
These rhymes of you end.

XIV.

SPRING, and fall, and summer, and winter,
Which may Earth love least of them all,
Whose arms embrace as their signs imprint her,
Summer, or winter, or spring, or fall?

The clear-eyed spring with the wood-birds mating.
The rose-red summer with eyes aglow,
The yellow fall with serene eyes waiting,
The wild-eyed winter with hair all snow?

Spring's eyes are soft, but if frosts benumb her
As winter's own will her shrewd breath sting:
Storms may rend the raiment of summer,
And fall grow bitter as harsh-lipped spring.

One sign for summer and winter guides me,
One for spring, and the like for fall:
Whichever from sight of my friend divides me,
That is the worst ill season of all.

XV.

WORSE than winter is spring
If I come not to sight of my king.
But then what a spring will it be
When my king takes homage of me!

I send his grace from afar
Homage, as though to a star;
As a shepherd whose flock takes flight
May worship a star by night.

As a flock that a wolf is upon
My songs take flight and are gone:
No heart is in any to sing
Aught but the praise of my king.

Fain would I once and again
Sing deeds and passions of men:
But ever a child's head gleams
Between my work and my dreams.

Between my hand and my eyes
The lines of a small face rise,
And the lines I trace and retrace
Are none but those of the face.

XVI.

TILL the tale of all this flock of days alike
All be done,
Weary days of waiting till the month's hand strike
Thirty-one,
Till the clock's hand of the month break off, and end
With the clock,
Till the last and whitest sheep at last be penned
Of the flock,
I their shepherd keep the count of night and day
With my song,
Though my song be, like this month which once was May
All too long.

XVII.

THE incarnate sun, a tall strong youth,
On old Greek eyes in sculpture smiled:
But trulier had it given the truth
To shape him like a child.

No face full-grown of all our dearest
So lightens all our darkness, none
Most loved of all our hearts hold nearest
So far outshines the sun,

As when with sly shy smiles that feign
Doubt if the hour be clear, the time
Fit to break off my work again
Or sport of prose or rhyme,

My friend peers in on me with merry
Wise face, and though the sky stay dim
The very light of day, the very
Sun's self comes in with him.

XVIII.

OUT of sight,
Out of mind!
Could the light
Prove unkind?

Can the sun
Quite forget
What was done
Ere he set?

Does the moon
When she wanes
Leave no tune
That remains

In the void
Shell of night
Overcloyed
With her light?

Must the shore
At low tide
Feel no more
Hope or pride,

No intense
Joy to be,
In the sense
Of the sea—

In the pulses
Of her shocks
It repulses,
When its rocks

Thrill and ring
As with glee?
Has my king
Cast off me,

Whom no bird
Flying south
Brings one word
From his mouth?

Not the ghost
Of a word
Riding post
Have I heard,

Since the day
When my king
Took away
With him spring,

And the cup
Of each flower
Shrivelled up
That same hour,

With no light
Left behind.
Out of sight,
Out of mind!

XIX.

BECAUSE I adore you
And fall
On the knees of my spirit before you—
After all,

You need not insult,
My king,
With neglect, though your spirit exult
In the spring,

Even me, though not worth,
God knows,
One word of you sent me in mirth,
Or one rose

Out of all in your garden
That grow
Where the frost and the wind never harden
Flakes of snow,

Nor ever is rain
At all,
But the roses rejoice to remain
Fair and tall:-

The roses of love,
More sweet
Than blossoms that rain from above
Round our feet,

When under high bowers
We pass,
Where the west wind freckles with flowers
All the grass.

But a child's thoughts bear
More bright
Sweet visions by day, and more fair
Dreams by night,

Than summer's whole treasure
Can be:
What am I that his thought should take
pleasure,
Then, in me?

I am only my love's
True lover,
With a nestful of songs, like doves
Under cover,

That I bring in my cap
Fresh caught,
To be laid on my small king's lap—
Worth just nought.

Yet it haply may hap
That he,
When the mirth in his veins is as sap
In a tree,

Will remember me too
Some day
Ere the transit be thoroughly through
Of this May—

Or perchance, if such grace
May be,
Some night when I dream of his face,
Dream of me.

Or if this be too high
A hope
For me to prefigure in my
Horoscope,

He may dream of the place
Where we
Basked once in the light of his face
Who now see

Nought brighter, not one
Thing bright,
Than the stars and the moon and the sun,
Day nor night.

XX.

DAY by darkling day,
Overpassing, bears away
Somewhat of the burden of this weary May.

Night by numbered night,
Waning, brings more near in sight
Hope that grows to vision of my heart's delight.

Nearer seems to burn
In the dawn's rekindling urn
Flame of fragrant incense, hailing his return.

Louder seems each bird
In the brightening branches heard
Still to speak some ever more delightful word.

All the mists that swim
Round the dawns that grow less dim
Still wax brighter and more bright with hope of him.

All the suns that rise
Bring that day more near our eyes
When the sight of him shall clear our clouded skies.

All the winds that roam
Fruitful fields of fruitless foam
Blow the bright hour near that brings his bright face home.

XXI.

I HEAR of two far hence
In a garden met,
And the fragrance blown from thence
Fades not yet.

The one is seven years old,
And my friend is he:
But the years of the other have told
Eighty-three.

To hear these twain converse
Or to see them greet
Were sweeter than softest verse
May be sweet.

The hoar old gardener there
With an eye more mild
Perchance than his mild white hair
Meets the child.

I had rather hear the words
That the twain exchange
Than the songs of all the birds
There that range,

Call, chirp, and twitter there
Through the garden-beds
Where the sun alike sees fair
Those two heads,

And which may holier be
Held in heaven of those
Or more worth heart's thanks to see
No man knows.

XXII.

OF such is the kingdom of heaven.
No glory that ever was shed
From the crowning star of the seven
That crown the north world's head,

No word that ever was spoken
Of human or godlike tongue,
Gave ever such godlike token
Since human harps were strung.

No sign that ever was given
To faithful or faithless eyes
Showed ever beyond clouds riven
So clear a Paradise.

Earth's creeds may be seventy times seven
And blood have defiled each creed:
If of such be the kingdom of heaven,
It must be heaven indeed.

XXIII.

THE wind on the downs is bright
As though from the sea:
And morning and night
Take comfort again with me.

He is nearer to-day,
Each night to each morning saith,

Whose return shall revive dead May
With the balm of his breath.

The sunset says to the moon,
He is nearer to-night
Whose coming in June
Is looked for more than the light.

Bird answers to bird,
Hour passes the sign on to hour,
And for joy of the bright news heard
Flower murmurs to flower.

The ways that were glad of his feet
In the woods that he knew
Grow softer to meet
The sense of his footfall anew.

He is near now as day,
Says hope to the new-born light:
He is near now as June is to May,
Says love to the night.

XXIV.

Good things I keep to console me
For lack of the best of all,
A child to command and control me,
Bid come and remain at his call.

Sun, wind, and woodland and highland,
Give all that ever they gave:
But my world is a cultureless island,
My spirit a masterless slave.

And friends are about me, and better
At summons of no man stand:
But I pine for the touch of a fetter,
The curb of a strong king's hand.

Each hour of the day in her season
Is mine to be served as I will:
And for no more exquisite reason
Are all served idly and ill.

By slavery my sense is corrupted,
My soul not fit to be free:
I would fain be controlled, interrupted,
Compelled as a thrall may be.

For fault of spur and of bridle
I tire of my stall to death:
My sail flaps joyless and idle
For want of a small child's breath.

XXV.

Whiter and whiter
The dark lines grow,
And broader opens and brighter
The sense of the text below.

Nightfall and morrow
Bring nigher the boy
Whom wanting we want not sorrow.
Whom having we want no joy.

Clearer and clearer
The sweet sense grows
Of the word which hath summer for hearer,
The word on the lips of the rose.

Duskily dwindles
Each deathlike day,
Till June rearising rekindles
The depth of the darkness of May.

XXVI.

'In his bright radiance and collateral light
Must I be comforted, not in his sphere.'

Stars in heaven are many,
Suns in heaven but one:
Nor for man may any
Star supplant the sun.

Many a child as joyous
As our far-off king
Meets as though to annoy us
In the paths of spring.

Sure as spring gives warning,
All things dance in tune:
Sun on Easter morning,
Cloud and windy moon,

Stars between the tossing
Boughs of tuneful trees,
Sails of ships recrossing
Leagues of dancing seas;

Best, in all this playtime,
Best of all in tune,
Girls more glad than Maytime,
Boys more bright than June;

Mixed with all those dances,
Far through field and street
Sing their silent glances,
Ring their radiant feet.

Flowers wherewith May crowned us
Fall ere June be crowned:
Children blossom round us
All the whole year round.

Is the garland worthless
For one rose the less,
And the feast made mirthless?
Love, at least, says yes.

Strange it were, with many
Stars enkindling air,
Should but one find any
Welcome: strange it were,

Had one star alone won
Praise for light from far:
Nay, love needs his own one
Bright particular star.

Hope and recollection
Only lead him right
In its bright reflection
And collateral light.

Find as yet we may not
Comfort in its sphere:
Yet these days will weigh not
When it warms us here;

When full-orbed it rises,
Now divine afar:
None in all the skies is
Half so good a star;

None that seers importune
Till a sign be won:
Star of our good fortune,
Rise and reign, our sun!

XXVII.

I PASS by the small room now forlorn
Where once each night as I passed I knew
A child's bright sleep from even to morn
Made sweet the whole night through.

As a soundless shell, as a songless nest,
Seems now the room that was radiant then
And fragrant with his happier rest
Than that of slumbering men.

The day therein is less than the day,
The night is indeed night now therein:
Heavier the dark seems there to weigh,
And slower the dawns begin,

As a nest fulfilled with birds, as a shell
Fulfilled with breath of a god's own hymn,
Again shall be this bare blank cell,
Made sweet again with him.

XXVIII.

SPRING darkens before us,
A flame going down,
With chant from the chorus
Of days without crown—
Cloud, rain, and sonorous
Soft wind on the down.

She is wearier not of us
Than we of the dream
That spring was to love us
And joy was to gleam
Through the shadows above us
That shift as they stream.

Half dark and half hoary,
Float far on the loud
Mild wind, as a glory
Half pale and half proud
From the twilight of story,
Her tresses of cloud;

Like phantoms that glimmer
Of glories of old
With ever yet dimmer
Pale circlets of gold
As darkness grows grimmer
And memory more cold.

Like hope growing clearer
With wane of the moon,
Shines toward us the nearer
Gold frontlet of June,
And a face with it dearer
Than midsummer noon.

XXIX.

YOU send me your love in a letter,
I send you my love in a song:
Ah child, your gift is the better,
Mine does you but wrong.

No fame, were the best less brittle,
No praise, were it wide as earth,
Is worth so much as a little
Child's love may be worth.

We see the children above us
As they might angels above:
Come back to us, child, if you love us,
And bring us your love.

XXX.

No time for books or for letters:
What time should there be?
No room for tasks and their fetters:
Full room to be free.

The wind and the sun and the Maytime
Had never a guest
More worthy the most that his playtime
Could give of its best.

If rain should come on, peradventure,
(But sunshine forbid!)
Vain hope in us haply might venture
To dream as it did.

But never may come, of all comers
Least welcome, the rain,
To mix with his servant the summer's
Rose-garlanded train!

He would write, but his hours are as busy
As bees in the sun,
And the jubilant whirl of their dizzy
Dance never is done.

The message is more than a letter,
Let love understand,
And the thought of his joys even better
Than sigh of his hand.

XXXI.

WIND, high-souled, full-hearted
South-west wind of the spring!
Ere April and earth had parted,
Skies, bright with thy forward wing,
Grew dark in an hour with the shadow behind it, that bade not a bird dare sing.

Wind whose feet are sunny,
Wind whose wings are cloud,
With lips more sweet than honey
Still, speak they low or loud,
Rejoice now again in the strength of thine heart: let the depth of thy soul wax proud.

We hear thee singing or sighing,
Just not given to sight,
All but visibly flying
Between the clouds and the light,
And the light in our hearts is enkindled, the shadow therein of the clouds put to flight.

From the gift of thine hands we gather
The core of the flowers therein,
Keen glad heart of heather,
Hot sweet heart of whin,
Twin breaths in thy godlike breath close blended of wild spring's wildest of kin.

All but visibly beating
We feel thy wings in the far
Clear waste, and the plumes of them fleeting,
Soft as swan's plumes are,
And strong as a wild swan's pinions, and swift as the flash of the flight of a star.

As the flight of a planet enkindled
Seems thy far soft flight
Now May's reign has dwindled
And the crescent of June takes light
And the presence of summer is here, and the hope of a welcomer presence in sight.

Wind, sweet-souled, great-hearted
Southwest wind on the wold!
From us is a glory departed
That now shall return as of old,
Borne back on thy wings as on eagle's expanding, and crowned with the sun-dawn's gold.

There is not a flower but rejoices,
There is not a leaf but has heard:
All the fields find voices,
All the woods are stirred:
There is not a nest but is brighter because of the coming of one bright bird.

Out of dawn and morning,
Noon and afternoon,
The sun to the world gives warning
Of news that brightens the moon;
And the stars all night exult with us, hearing of joy that shall come with June.

SUNRISE.

If the wind and the sunlight of April and August had mingled the past and hereafter
In a single ado able season whose life were a rapture of love and of laughter,
And the blithest of singers were back with a song; if again from his tomb as from prison,
If again from the night or the twilight of ages Aristophanes had arisen,
With the gold-feathered wings of a bird that were also a god upon earth at his shoulders,
And the gold-flowing laugh of the manhood of old at his lips, for a joy to beholders,
He alone unrebuked of presumption were able to set to some adequate measure
The delight of our eyes in the dawn that restores them the sun of their sense and the pleasure.
For the days of the darkness of spirit are over for all of us here, and the season
When desire was a longing, and absence a thorn, and rejoicing a word without reason.
For the roof overhead of the pines is astir with delight as of jubilant voices,
And the floor underfoot of the bracken and heather alive as a heart that rejoices.
For the house that was childless awhile, and the light of it darkened, the pulse of it dwindled,
Rings radiant again with a child's bright feet, with the light of his face is rekindled.
And the ways of the meadows that knew him, the sweep of the down that the sky's belt closes,
Grow gladder at heart than the soft wind made them whose feet were but fragrant with roses,
Though the fall of the year be upon us, who trusted in June and by June were defrauded,
And the summer that brought us not back the desire of our eyes be gone hence unapplauded.
For July came joyless among us, and August went out from us arid and sterile,
And the hope of our hearts, as it seemed, was no more than a flower that the seasons imperil,
And the joy of our hearts, as it seemed, than a thought which regret had not heart remember,
Till four dark months overpast were atoned for, and summer began in September.
Hark, April again as a bird in the house with a child's voice hither and thither:
See, May in the garden again with a child's face cheering the woods ere they wither.
June laughs in the light of his eyes, and July on the sunbright cheeks of him slumbers,
And August glows in a smile more sweet than the cadence of gold-mouthed numbers.
In the morning the sight of him brightens the sun, and the noon with delight in him flushes,
And the silence of nightfall is music about him as soft as the sleep that it hushes.
We awake with a sense of a sunrise that is not a gift of the sundawn's giving,
And a voice that salutes us is sweeter than all sounds else in the world of the living.
And a presence that warms us is brighter than all in the world of our visions beholden,
Though the dreams of our sleep were as those that the light of a world without grief makes golden.
For the best that the best of us ever devised as a likeness of heaven and its glory,
What was it of old, or what is it and will be forever, in song or in story,
Or in shape or in color of carven or painted resemblance, adored of all ages,
But a vision recorded of children alive in the pictures of old or the pages?
Where children are not, heaven is not, and heaven if they come not again shall be never:
But the face and the voice of a child are assurance of heaven and its promise forever.

A MIDSUMMER HOLIDAY.

THE SEABOARD.

THE sea is at ebb, and the sound of her utmost word
Is soft as the least wave's lapse in a still small reach.
From bay into bay, on quest of a goal deferred,
From headland ever to headland and breach to breach
Where earth gives ear to the message that all days preach
With changes of gladness and sadness that cheer and chide,
The lone way lures me along by a chance untried
That haply, if hope dissolve not and faith be whole,
Not all for nought shall I seek, with a dream for guide,
The goal that is not, and ever again the goal.

The trackless ways are untravelled of sail or bird;
The hoar wave hardly recedes from the soundless beach.
The silence of instant noon goes nigh to be heard,
The viewless void to be visible: all and each,
A closure of calm no clamor of storm can breach
Concludes and confines and absorbs them on either side,
All forces of light and of life and the live world's pride,
Sands hardly ruffled of ripples that hardly roll
Seem ever to show as in reach of a swift brief stride
The goal that is not, and ever again the goal.

The waves are a joy to the seamew, the meads to the herd,
And a joy to the heart is a goal that it may not reach.
No sense that for ever the limits of sense engird,
No hearing or sight that is vassal to form or speech,
Learns ever the secret that shadow and silence teach,
Hears ever the notes that or ever they swell subside,
Sees ever the light that lights not the loud world's tide,
Clasps ever the cause of the lifelong scheme's control
Wherethrough we pursue, till the waters of life be dried,
The goal that is not, and ever again the goal.

Friend, what have we sought or seek we, whate'er betide,
Though the seaboard shift its mark from afar descried,
But aims whence ever anew shall arise the soul?
Love, thought, song, life, but show for a glimpse and hide
The goal that is not, and ever again the goal.

A HAVEN.

EAST and north a waste of waters, south and west
Lonelier lands than dreams in sleep would feign to be,
When the soul goes forth on travel, and is prest
Round and compassed in with clouds that flash and flee.
Dells without a streamlet, downs without a tree,
Cirques of hollow cliff that crumble, give their guest
Little hope, till hard at hand he pause, to see
Where the small town smiles, a warm still sea-side nest.

Many a lone long mile, by many a headland's crest,
Down by many a garden dear to bird and bee,
Up by many a sea-down's bare and breezy breast,
Winds the sandy strait of road where flowers run free.
Here along the deep steep lanes by field and lea
Knights have carolled, pilgrims chanted, on their quest,
Haply, ere a roof rose toward the bleak strand's lee,
Where the small town smiles, a warm still sea-side nest.

Are the wild lands cursed perchance of time, or blest,
Sad with fear or glad with comfort of the sea?
Are the ruinous towers of churches fallen on rest
Watched of wanderers woful now, glad once as we,
When the night has all men's eyes and hearts in fee,
When the soul bows down dethroned and dispossest?
Yet must peace keep guard, by day's and night's decree,
Where the small town smiles, a warm still sea-side nest.

Friend, the lonely land is bright for you and me
All its wild ways through: but this methinks is best,
Here to watch how kindly time and change agree
Where the small town smiles, a warm still sea-side nest.

ON A COUNTRY ROAD.

ALONG these low pleached lanes, on such a day,
So soft a day as this, through shade and sun,
With glad grave eyes that scanned the glad wild way,
And hearts still hovering o'er a song begun,
And smile that warmed the world with benison,
Our father, lord long since of lordly rhyme,
Long since hath haply ridden, when the lime
Bloomed broad above him, flowering where he came.
Because thy passage once made warm this clime,
Our father Chaucer, here we praise thy name.

Each year that England clothes herself with May,
She takes thy likeness on her. Time hath spun
Fresh raiment all in vain and strange array
For earth and man's new spirit, fain to shun
Things past for dreams of better to be won,
Through many a century since thy funeral chime
Rang, and men deemed it death's most direful crime
To have spared not thee for very love or shame;
And yet, while mists round last year's memories climb,
Our father Chaucer, here we praise thy name.

Each turn of the old wild road whereon we stray,
Meseems, might bring us face to face with one
Whom seeing we could not but give thanks and pray
For England's love our father and her son
To speak with us as once in days long done
With all men, sage and churl and monk and mime,
Who knew not as we know the soul sublime
That sang for song's love more than lust of fame,
Yet, though this be not, yet, in happy time,
Our father Chaucer, here we praise thy name.

Friend, even as bees about the flowering thyme,
Years crowd on years, till hoar decay begrime
Names once beloved: but, seeing the sun the same,
As birds of autumn fain to praise the prime,
Our father Chaucer, here we praise thy name.

THE MILL GARDEN.

STATELY stand the sunflowers, glowing down the garden-side,
Ranged in royal rank arow along the warm gray wall,
Whence their deep disks burn at rich midnoon afire with pride,
Even as though their beams indeed were sunbeams, and the tall
Sceptral stems bore stars whose reign endures, not flowers that fall.
Lowlier laughs and basks the kindlier flower of homelier fame,
Held by love the sweeter that it blooms in Shakespeare's name,
Fragrant yet as though his hand had touched and made it thrill,
Like the whole world's heart, with warm new life and gladdening flame.
Fair befall the fair green close that lies below the mill!

Softlier here the flower-soft feet of refluent seasons glide,

Lightlier breathes the long low note of change's
gentler call.
Wind and storm and landslip feed the lone
sea's gulf outside,
Half a seamew's first flight hence; but scarce
may these appal
Peace, whose perfect seal is set for signet here
on all.
Steep and deep and sterile, under fields no
plough can tame,
Did the cliffs full-fledged with poppies red as
love or shame.
Wide wan daisies bleak and bold, or herbage
harsh and chill;
Here the full clove pinks and wallflowers
crown the love they claim.
Fair befall the fair green close that lies below
the mill!

All the place breathes low, but not for fear
lest ill betide,
Soft as roses answering roses, or a dove's re-
call.
Little heeds it how the seaward banks may
stoop and slide,
How the winds and years may hold all outer
things in thrall,
How their wrath may work on hoar church
tower and boundary wall.
Far and wide the waste and ravin of their rule
proclaim
Change alone the changeless lord of things,
alone the same:
Here a flower is stronger than the winds that
work their will,
Or the years that wing their way through dark-
ness toward their aim.
Fair befall the fair green close that lies below
the mill!

Friend, the home that smiled us welcome
hither when we came,
When we pass again with summer, surely
should reclaim
Somewhat given of heart's thanksgiving more
than words fulfil—
More than song, were song more sweet than
all but love, might frame.
Fair befall the fair green close that lies
below the mill!

A SEA-MARK.

RAINS have left the sea-blanks ill to climb:
Waveward sinks the loosening seaboard's
floor:
Half the sliding cliffs are mire and slime.
Earth, a fruit rain-rotted to the core,
Drops dissolving down in flakes, that pour
Dense as gouts from eaves grown foul with
grime.
One sole rock which years that scathe not
score
Stands a sea-mark in the tides of time.

Time were even as even the rainiest clime,
Life were even as even this lapsing shore,
Might not aught outlive their trustless prime:
Vainly fear would wail or hope implore,
Vainly grief revile or love adore
Seasons clothed in sunshine, rain, or rime.
Now for me one comfort held in store
Stands a sea-mark in the tides of time.

Once, by fate's default or chance's crime,
Each apart, our burdens each we bore;
Heard, in monotones like bells that chime,
Chime the sounds of sorrows, float and soar
Joy's full carols, near or far before;
Heard not yet across the alternate rhyme
Time's tongue tell what sign set fast of yore
Stands a sea-mark in the tides of time.

Friend, the sign we knew not heretofore
Towers in sight here present and sublime.
Faith in faith established evermore
Stands a sea-mark in the tides of time.

THE CLIFFSIDE PATH.

SEAWARD goes the sun, and homeward by the
down
We, before the night upon his grave be sealed.
Low behind us lies the bright steep murmur-
ing town,
High before us heaves the steep rough silent
field.
Breach by ghastlier breach, the cliffs collaps-
ing yield:
Half the path is broken, half the banks divide;
Flawed and crumbled, riven and rent, they
cleave and slide
Toward the ridged and wrinkled waste of
girdling sand
Deep beneath, whose furrows tell how far and
wide
Wind is lord and change is sovereign of the
strand.

Star by star on the unsunned waters twiring
down,
Golden spear-points glance against a silver
shield.

Over banks and bents, across the headland's crown,
As by pulse of gradual plumes through twilight wheeled,
Soft as sleep, the waking wind awakes the weald.
Moor and copse and fallow, near or far descried,
Feel the mild wings move, and gladden where they glide:
Silence, uttering love that all things understand,
Bids the quiet fields forget that hard beside
Wind is lord and change is sovereign of the strand.

Yet may sight, ere all the hoar soft shade grow brown,
Hardly reckon half the rifts and rents unhealed
Where the scarred cliffs downward sundering drive and drown,
Hewn as if with stroke of swords in tempest steeled,
Wielded as the night's will and the wind's may wield.
Crowned and zoned in vain with flowers of autumn-tide,
Soon the blasts shall break them, soon the waters hide;
Soon, where late we stood, shall no man ever stand.
Life and love seek harborage on the landward side:
Wind is lord and change is sovereign of the strand.

Friend, though man be less than these, for all his pride,
Yet, for all his weakness, shall not hope abide?
Wind and change can wreck but life and waste but land:
Truth and trust are sure, though here till all subside
Wind is lord and change is sovereign of the strand.

IN THE WATER.

THE sea is awake, and the sound of the song of the joy of her waking is rolled
From afar to the star that recedes, from anear to the wastes of the wild wide shore.
Her call is a trumpet compelling us homeward: if dawn in her east be acold,
From the sea shall we crave not her grace to rekindle the life that it kindled before,
Her breath to requicken, her bosom to rock us, her kisses to bless as of yore?
For the wind, with his wings half open, at pause in the sky, neither fettered nor free,
Leans waveward and flutters the ripple to laughter: and fain would the twain of us be
Where lightly the wave yearns forward from under the curve of the deep dawn's dome,
And, full of the morning and fired with the pride of the glory thereof and the glee,
Strike out from the shore as the heart in us bids and beseeches, athirst for the foam.

Life holds not an hour that is better to live in: the past is a tale that is told,
The future a sun-flecked shadow, alive and asleep, with a blessing in store.
As we give us again to the waters, the rapture of limbs that the waters enfold
Is less than the rapture of spirit whereby, though the burden it quits were sore,
Our souls and the bodies they wield at their will are absorbed in the life they adore—
In the life that endures no burden, and bows not the forehead, and bends not the knee—
In the life everlasting of earth and of heaven, in the laws that atone and agree,
In the measureless music of things, in the fervor of forces that rest or that roam,
That cross and return and reissue, as I after you and as you after me
Strike out from the shore as the heart in us bids and beseeches, athirst for the foam.

For, albeit he were less than the least of them, haply the heart of a man may be bold
To rejoice in the word of the sea as a mother's that saith to the son she bore,
Child, was not the life in thee mine, and my spirit the breath in thy lips from of old?
Have I let not thy weakness exult in my strength, and thy foolishness learn of my lore?
Have I helped not or healed not thine anguish, or made not the might of thy gladness more?

And surely his heart should answer, The light
of the love of my life is in thee.
She is fairer than earth, and the sun is not
fairer, the wind is not blither than she:
From my youth hath she shown me the joy of
her bays that I crossed, of her cliffs
that I clomb.
Till now that the twain of us here, in desire
of the dawn and in trust of the sea,
Strike out from the shore as the heart in us
bids and beseeches, athirst for the
foam.

Friend, earth is a harbor of refuge for winter,
a covert whereunder to flee
When day is the vassal of night, and the
strength of the hosts of her mightier
than he;
But here is the presence adored of me, here
my desire is at rest and at home.
There are cliffs to be climbed upon land, there
are ways to be trodden and ridden:
but we
Strike out from the shore as the heart in us
bids and beseeches, athirst for the
foam.

THE SUNBOWS.

SPRAY of song that springs in April, light of
love that laughs through May,
Live and die and live forever: nought of all
things far less fair
Keeps a surer life than these that seem to
pass like fire away.
In the souls they live which are but all the
brighter that they were;
In the hearts that kindle, thinking what de-
light of old was there.
Wind that shapes and lifts and shifts them
bids perpetual memory play
Over dreams and in and out of deeds and
thoughts which seem to wear
Light that leaps and runs and revels through
the springing flames of spray.

Dawn is wild upon the waters where we drink
of dawn to-day:
Wide, from wave to wave rekindling in re-
bound through radiant air,
Flash the fires unwoven and woven again of
wind that works in play,
Working wonders more than heart may note
or sight may wellnigh dare,
Wefts of rarer light than colors rain from
heaven, though this be rare.
Arch on arch unbuilt in building, reared and
ruined ray by ray,
Breaks and brightens, laughs and lessens,
even till eyes may hardly bear
Light that leaps and runs and revels through
the springing flames of spray.

Year on year sheds light and music rolled
and flashed from bay to bay
Round the summer capes of time and winter
headlands keen and bare
Whence the soul keeps watch, and bids her
vassal memory watch and pray,
If perchance the dawn may quicken, or per-
chance the midnight spare.
Silence quells not music, darkness takes not
sunlight in her snare;
Shall not joys endure that perish? Yea,
saith dawn, though night say nay.
Life on life goes out, but very life enkindles
everywhere
Light that leaps and runs and revels through
the springing flames of spray.

Friend, were life no more than this is, well
would yet the living fare.
All aflower and all afire and all flung heaven-
ward, who shall say
Such a flash of life were worthless? This is
worth a world of care—
Light that leaps and runs and revels through
the springing flames of spray.

ON THE VERGE.

HERE begins the sea that ends not till the
world's end. Where we stand,
Could we know the next high sea-mark set
beyond these waves that gleam,
We should know what never man hath
known, nor eye of man hath scanned.
Nought beyond these coiling clouds that melt
like fume of shrines that steam
Breaks or stays the strength of waters till
they pass our bounds of dream.
Where the waste Land's End leans westward,
all the seas it watches roll
Find their border fixed beyond them, and a
worldwide shore's control:
These whereby we stand no shore beyond us
limits: these are free.
Gazing hence, we see the water that grows
iron round the Pole,
From the shore that hath no shore beyond it
set in all the sea.

Sail on sail along the sea-line fades and flashes; here on land
Flash and fade the wheeling wings on wings of mews that plunge and scream.
Hour on hour along the line of life and time's evasive strand
Shines and darkens, wanes and waxes, slays and dies: and scarce they seem
More than motes that thronged and trembled in the brief noon's breath and beam.
Some with crying and wailing, some with notes like sound of bells that toll,
Some with sighing and laughing, some with words that blessed and made us whole,
Passed, and left us, and we know not what they were, nor what were we.
Would we know, being mortal? Never breath of answering whisper stole
From the shore that hath no shore beyond it set in all the sea.

Shadows, would we question darkness? Ere our eyes and brows be fanned
Round with airs of twilight, washed with dews from sleep's eternal stream,
Would we know sleep's guarded secret? Ere the fire consume the brand,
Would it know if yet its ashes may requicken? yet we deem
Surely man may know, or ever night unyoke her starry team,
What the dawn shall be, or if the dawn shall be not: yea, the scroll
Would we read of sleep's dark scripture, pledge of peace or doom of dole.
Ah, but here man's heart leaps, yearning toward the gloom with venturous glee,
Though his pilot eye behold nor bay nor harbor, rock nor shoal,
From the shore that hath no shore beyond it set in all the sea.

Friend, who knows if death indeed have lite or life have death for goal?
Day nor night can tell us, nor may seas declare nor skies unroll
What has been from everlasting, or if aught shall always be.
Silence answering only strikes response reverberate on the soul
From the shore that hath no shore beyond it set in all the sea.

A NEW-YEAR ODE.

TO VICTOR HUGO.

I.

TWICE twelve times have the springs of years refilled
Their fountains from the river-head of time
Since by the green sea's marge, ere autumn chilled
Waters and woods with sense of changing clime,
A great light rose upon my soul, and thrilled
My spirit of sense with sense of spheres in chime,
Sound as of song wherewith a God would build
Towers that no force of conquering war might climb.
Wind shook the glimmering sea
Even as my soul in me
Was stirred with breath of mastery more sublime,
Uplift and borne along
More thunderous tides of song,
Where wave rang back to wave more rapturous rhyme
And world on world flashed lordlier light
Than ever lit the wandering ways of ships by night.

II.

The spirit of God, whose breath of life is song,
Moved, though his word was human, on the face
Of those deep waters of the soul, too long
Dumb, dark, and cold, that waited for the grace
Wherewith day kindles heaven: and as some throng
Of quiring wings fills full some lone chill place
With sudden rush of life and joy, more strong
Than death or sorrow or all night's darkling race,

So was my heart, that heard
All heaven in each deep word,
Filled full with light of thought, and waxed apace
Itself more wide and deep,
To take that gift and keep
And cherish while my days fulfilled their space;
A record wide as earth and sea,
The Legend writ of Ages past and yet to be.

III.

As high the chant of paradise and Hell
Rose, when the soul of Milton gave it wings;
As wide the sweep of Shakespeare's empire fell,
When life had bared for him her secret springs;
But not his various soul might range and dwell
Amid the mysteries of the founts of things;
Nor Milton's range of rule so far might swell
Across the kingdoms of forgotten kings
Men, centuries, nations, time,
Life, death, love, trust, and crime,
Rang record through the change of smitten strings
That felt an exile's hand
Sound hope for every land
More loud than storm's cloud-sundering trumpet rings,
And bid strong death for judgment rise,
And life bow down for judgment of his awless eyes.

IV.

And death, soul-stricken in his strength resigned
The keeping of the sepulchres to song;
And life was humbled, and his height of mind
Brought lower than lies a grave-stone fallen along;
And like a ghost and like a God mankind
Rose clad with light and darkness; weak and strong,
Clean and unclean, with eyes afire and blind,
Wounded and whole, fast bound with cord and thong,
Free; fair and foul, sin-stained,
And sinless; crowned and chained;
Fleet-limbed, and halting all his lifetime long;
Glad of deep shame, and sad
For shame's sake; wise, and mad;
Girt round with love and hate of right and wrong;
Armed and disarmed for sleep and strife;
Proud, and sore fear made havoc of his pride of life.

V.

Shadows and shapes of fable and storied sooth
Rose glorious as with gleam of gold unpriced;
Eve, clothed with heavenly nakedness and youth
That matched the morning's; Cain, self-sacrificed
On crime's first altar: legends wise as truth
And truth in legends deep embalmed and spiced;
The stars that saw the starlike eyes of Ruth,
The grave that heard the clarion call of Christ
And higher than sorrow and mirth
The heavenly song of earth
Sprang, in such notes as might have well sufficed
To still the storms of time
And sin's contentious clime
With peace renewed of life reparadised:
Earth, scarred not yet with temporal scars;
Goddess of gods, our mother, chosen among the stars.

VI.

Earth fair as heaven, ere change and time set odds
Between them, light and darkness know not when.
And fear, grown strong through panic periods,
Crouched, a crowned worm, in faith's Lernean fen,
And love lay bound, and hope was scourged with rods,
And death cried out from desert and from den,
Seeing all the heaven above him dark with gods
And all the world about him marred of men
Cities that nought might purge
Save the sea's whelming surge
From all the pent pollutions in their pen
Deep death drank down, and wrought
With wreck of all things, nought
That none might live of all their names again,
Nor aught of all whose life is breath
Serve any God whose likeness was not like to death.

VII.

Till by the lips and eyes of one live nation
The blind mute world found grace to see and speak,
And light watched rise a more divine creation
At that more godlike utterance of the Greek,
Let there be freedom. Kings whose orient station
Made pale the morn, and all her presage bleak,
Girt each with strengths of all his generation,
Dim tribes of shamefaced soul and sun-swart cheek,
Twice, urged with one desire,
Son following hard on sire,
With all the wrath of all a world to wreak,
And all the rage of night
Afire against the light
Whose weakness makes her strong-winged empire weak,
Stood up to unsay that saying, and fell
Too far for song, though song were thousand-tongued, to tell.

VIII.

From those deep echoes of the loud Ægean
That rolled response whereat false fear was chid
By songs of joy sublime and Sophoclean,
Fresh notes reverberate westward rose to bid
All wearier times take comfort from the pæan
That tells the night what deeds the sunrise did.
Even till the lawns and torrents Pyrenean
Ring answer from the records of the Cid.
But never force of fountains
From sunniest hearts of mountains
Wherein the soul of hidden June was hid
Poured forth so pure and strong
Springs of reiterate song,
Loud as the streams his fame was reared amid,
More sweet than flowers they feed, and fair
With grace of lordlier sunshine and more lambent air.

IX.

A star more prosperous than the storm-clothed east's
Clothed all the warm south-west with light like spring's
When hands of strong men spread the wolves their feasts
And from snake-spirited princes plucked the stings;
Ere earth, grown all one den of hurtling beasts,
Had for her sunshine and her watersprings
The fire of hell that warmed the hearts of priests,
The wells of blood that slaked the lips of kings.
The shadow of night made stone
Stood populous and alone,
Dense with its dead and loathed of living things
That draw not life from death,
And as with hell's own breath
And clangor of immitigable wing
Vexed the fair face of Paris, made
Foul in its murderous imminence of sound and shade.

X.

And all these things were parcels of the vision
That moved a cloud before his eyes, or stood
A tower half shattered by the strong collision
Of spirit and spirit, of evil gods with good;
A ruinous wall rent through with grim division,
Where time had marked his every monstrous mood
Of scorn and strength and pride and self-derision:
The Tower of Things, that felt upon it brood
Night, and about it cast
The storm of all the past
Now mute and forceless as a fire subdued:
Yet through the rifted years
And centuries veiled with tears
And ages as with very death imbrued
Freedom, whence hope and faith grow strong,
Smiles, and firm love sustains the indissoluble song.

XI.

Above the cloudy coil of days deceased,
Its might of flight, with mists and storms beset,
Burns heavenward, as with heart and hope increased,
For all the change of tempests, all the fret
Of frost or fire, keen fraud or force released
Wherewith the world once wasted knows not yet
If evil or good lit all the darkling east
From the ardent moon of sovereign Mahomet

Sublime in work and will
The song sublimer still
Salutes him, ere the splendor shrink and set;
Then with imperious eye
And wing that sounds the sky
Soars and sees risen as ghosts in concourse met
The old world's seven elder wonders, firm
As dust and fixed as shadows, weaker than the worm.

XII.

High witness borne of knights high-souled and hoary
Before death's face and empire's rings and glows
Even from the dust their life poured forth left gory,
As the eagle's cry rings after from the snows
Supreme rebuke of shame clothed round with glory
And hosts whose track the false crowned eagle shows;
More loud than sounds through stormiest song and story
The laugh of slayers whose names the sea-wind knows;
More loud than peals on land
In many a red wet hand
The clash of gold and cymbals as they close;
Loud as the blast that meets
The might of marshalled fleets
And sheds it into shipwreck, like a rose
Blown from a child's light grasp in sign
That earth's high lords are lords not over breeze and brine.

XIII.

Above the dust and mire of man's dejection
The wide-winged spirit of song resurgent sees
His wingless and long-laboring resurrection
Up the arduous heaven, by sore and strange degrees,
Mount, and with splendor of the soul's reflection
Strike heaven's dark sovereign down upon his knees,
Pale in the light of orient insurrection,
And dumb before the almightier lord's decrees
Who bade him be of yore,
Who bids him be no more:
And all earth's heart is quickened as the sea's
Even as when sunrise burns
The very sea's heart yearns
That heard not on the midnight-walking breeze
The wail that woke with evensong
From hearts of poor folk watching all the darkness long.

XIV.

Dawn and the beams of sunbright song illume
Love, with strange children at her piteous breast,
By grace of weakness from the grave-mouthed gloom
Plucked, and by mercy lulled to living rest,
Soft as the nursling's nigh the grandsire's tomb
That fell on sleep, a bird of rifled nest;
Soft as the lips whose smile unsaid the doom
That gave their sire to violent death's arrest.
Even for such love's sake strong,
Wrath fires the inveterate song
That bids hell gape for one whose bland mouth blest
All slayers and liars that sighed
Prayer as they slew and lied
Till blood had clothed his priesthood as a vest,
And hears, though darkness yet be dumb
The silence of the trumpet of the wrath to come.

XV.

Nor lacked these lights of constellated age
A star among them fed with life more dire
Lit with his bloodred fame whose withering rage
Made earth for heaven's sake one funereal pyre
And life in faith's name one appointed stage
For death to purge the souls of men with fire.
Heaven, earth, and hell on one thrice tragic page
Mixed all their light and darkness: one man's lyre
Gave all their echoes voice;
Bade rose-cheeked love rejoice,
And cold-lipped craft with ravenous fear conspire,
And fire-eyed faith smite hope
Dead, seeing enthroned as Pope

And crowned of heaven on earth at hell's desire
Sin, called by death's incestuous name Borgia: the world that heard it flushed and quailed with shame.

XVI.

Another year, and hope triumphant heard
The consummating sound of song that spake
Conclusion to the multitudinous word
Whose expectation held her spirit awake
Till full delight for twice twelve years deferred
Bade all souls entering eat and drink, and take
A third time comfort given them, that the third
Might heap the measure up of twain, and make
The sinking year sublime
Among all sons of time
And fair in all men's memories for his sake.
Each thought of ours became
Fire, kindling from his fame,
And music winding in his wide song's wake.
Yea, and the world bore witness here
How great a light was risen upon this darkening year.

XVII.

It was the dawn of winter: sword in sheath,
Change, veiled and mild, came down the gradual air
With cold slow smiles that hid the doom beneath.
Five days to die in yet were autumn's, ere
The last leaf withered from his flowerless wreath.
South, east and north, our skies were all blown bare,
But westward over glimmering holt and heath
Cloud, wind, and light had made a heaven more fair
Than ever dream or truth
Showed earth in time's keen youth
When men with angels communed unaware.
Above the sun's head, now
Veiled even to the ardent brow,
Rose two sheer wings of sundering cloud, that were
As a bird's poised for vehement flight,
Full-fledged with plumes of tawny fire and hoar gray light.

XVIII.

As midnight black, as twilight brown, they spread,
But feathered thick with flame that streaked and lined
Their living darkness, ominous else of dread,
From south to northmost verge of heaven inclined
Most like some giant angel's, whose bent head
Bowed earthward, as with message for mankind
Of doom or benediction to be shed
From passage of his presence. Far behind,
Even while thy seemed to close,
Stoop, and take flight, arose
Above them, higher than heavenliest thought may find
In light or night supreme
Of vision or of dream,
Immeasurable of men's eyes or mounting mind,
Heaven, manifest in manifold
Light of pure pallid amber, cheered with fire of gold.

XIX.

And where the fine gold faded all the sky
Shone green as the outer sea when April glows,
Inlaid with flakes and feathers fledged to fly
Of cloud suspense in rapture and repose,
With large live petals, broad as love bids lie
Full open when the sun salutes the rose,
And small rent sprays where with the heavens most high
Were strewn as autumn strews the garden-close
With ruinous roseleaves whirled
About their wan chill world,
Through wind-worn bowers that now no music knows,
Spoil of the dim dusk year
Whose utter night is near,
And near the flower of dawn beyond it blows;
Till east and west were fire and light,
As though the dawn to come had flushed the coming night.

XX.

The highways paced of men that toil or play,
The byways known of none but lonely feet,
Were paven of purple woven of night and day

With hands that met as hands of friends might meet—
As though night's were not lifted up to slay
And day's had waxed not weaker. Peace more sweet
Than music, light more soft than shadow, lay
On downs and moorlands wan with day's defeat,
That watched afar above
Life's very rose of love
Let all its lustrous leaves fall, fade, and fleet,
And fill all heaven and earth
Full as with fires of birth
Whence time should feed his years with light and heat:
Nay, not life's, but a flower more strong
Than life or time or death, love's very rose of song.

XXI.

Song visible, whence all men's eyes were lit
With love and loving wonder: song that glowed
Through cloud and change on souls that knew not it
And hearts that wist not whence their comfort flowed,
Whence fear was lightened of her fever-fit,
Whence anguish of her life-compelling load.
Yea, no man's head whereon the fire alit.
Of all that passed along that sunset road
Westward, no brow so drear,
No eye so dull of cheer,
No face so mean whereon that light abode,
But as with alien pride
Strange godhead glorified
Each feature flushed from heaven with fire that showed
The likeness of its own life wrought
By strong transfiguration as of living thought.

XXII.

Nor only clouds of the everlasting sky,
Nor only men that paced that sunward way
To the utter bourne of evening, passed not by
Unblest or unillumined: none might say,
Of all things visible in the wide world's eye,
That all too low for all that grace it lay:
The lowliest lakelets of the moorland nigh,
The narrowest pools where shallowest wavelets play,
Were filled from heaven above
With light like fire of love,
With flames and colors like a dawn in May,
As hearts that lowlier live
With light of thoughts that give
Light from the depth of souls more deep than they
Through song's or story's kindling scroll,
The splendor of the shadow that reveals the soul.

XXIII.

For, when such light is in the world, we share,
All of us, all the rays thereof that shine:
Its presence is alive in the unseen air,
Its fire within our veins as quickening wine;
A spirit is shed on all men everywhere,
Known or not known of all men for divine.
Yea, as the sun makes heaven, that light makes fair
All souls of ours, all lesser souls than thine,
Priest, prophet, seer and sage,
Lord of a subject age
That bears thy seal upon it for a sign;
Whose name shall be thy name,
Whose light thy light of fame,
The light of love that makes thy soul a shrine;
Whose record through all years to be
Shall bear this witness written—that its womb bare thee.

XXIV.

O mystery, whence to one man's hand was given
Power upon all things of the spirit, and might
Whereby the veil of all the years was riven
And naked stood the secret soul of night!
O marvel, hailed of eyes whence cloud is driven,
That shows at last wrong reconciled with right
By death divine of evil and sin forgiven!
O light of song, whose fire is perfect light!
No speech, no voice, no thought,
No love, avails us aught
For service of thanksgiving in his sight
Who hath given us all for ever
Such gifts that man gave never
So many and great since first Time's wings took flight.
Man may not praise a spirit above
Man's: life and death shall praise him: we can only love.

XXV.

Life, everlasting while the worlds endure,
Death, self-abased before a power more high,

Shall bear one witness, and their word stand sure,
That not till time be dead shall this man die.
Love, like a bird, comes loyal to his lure;
Fame flies before him, wingless else to fly.
A child's heart toward his kind is not more pure,
An eagle's toward the sun no lordlier eye.
Awe sweet as love and proud
As fame, though hushed and bowed
Yearns toward him silent as his face goes by:
All crowns before his crown
Triumphantly bow down,
For pride that one more great than all draws nigh:
All souls applaud, all hearts acclaim,
One heart benign, one soul supreme, one conquering name.

NOTES.

ST.	V.	
V.	3.	La Légende des Siècles: Le Sacre de la Femme.
	4.	La Conscience.
	7.	Booz endormi.
	8.	Première rencontre du Christ avec le tombeau.
	9.	La Terre: Hymme.
VI.	3.	Les Temps Paniques.
	9.	La Ville Disparue.
VII.		Les Trois Cents.
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	7.	Le Romancero du Cid.
IX.	3.	Le Petit Roi de Galice.
	5.	Le Jour des Rois.
	9.	Montfaucon.
X.		La vision d'ou est sorti ce livre
XI.	9.	L'an neuf de l'Hégire.
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XII.	1.	Les quatre jours d'Elciis.
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XIII.	1.	Le Satyre.
	12.	Les paysans au bord de la mer.
XIV.	1.	Les pauvres gens.
	5.	Petit Paul.
	7.	Guerre Civile.
	9.	La Vision de Dante.
	15.	La Trompette du Jugement.
XV.		Torquemada (1882).
XVI.		La Légende des Siècles: tome cinquiéme et dernier (1883).
XVII.		November 25, 1883.

LINES ON THE MONUMENT OF GIUSEPPE MAZZINI.

ITALIA, mother of the souls of men,
Mother divine,
Of all that served thee best with sword or pen,
All sons of thine,

Thou knowest that here the likeness of the best.
Before thee stands;
The head most high, the heart found faithfulest,
The purest hands.

Above the fume and foam of time that flits,
The soul, we know,
Now sits on high where Alighieri sits
With Angelo.

Not his own heavenly tongue hath heavenly speech
Enough to say
What this man was, whose praise no thought may reach,
No words can weigh.

Since man's first mother brought to mortal birth
Her first-born son,
Such grace befell not ever man on earth
As crowns this one.

Of God nor man was ever this thing said,
That he could give
Life back to her who gave him, whence his dead mother might live.

But this man found his mother dead and slain,
With fast sealed eyes,
And bade the dead rise up and live again,
And she did rise.

And all the world was bright with her through him:
But dark with strife,
Like heaven's own sun that storming clouds bedim,
Was all his life.

Life and the clouds are vanished: hate and fear
Have had their span
Of time to hurt, and are not: he is here,
The sunlike man.

City superb that hadst Columbus first
For sovereign son,
Be prouder that thy breast hath later nurst
This mightier one.

Glory be his forever, while his land
Lives and is free,
As with controlling breath and sovereign hand
He bade her be.

Earth shows to heaven the names by thousands told
That crown her fame,
But highest of all that heaven and earth behold
Mazzini's name.

LES CASQUETS.

FROM the depth of the waters that lighten and darken
With change everlasting of life and of death,
Where hardly by noon if the lulled ear hearken
It hears the sea's as a tired child's breath,
Where hardly by night if an eye dare scan it
The storm lets shipwreck be seen or heard,
As the reefs to the waves and the foam to the granite

Respond one merciless word,
Sheer seen and far, in the sea's live heaven,
A seamew's flight from the wild sweet land,
White-plumed with foam if the wind wake, seven
Black helms as of warriors that stir not stand.
From the depths that abide and the waves that environ
Seven rocks rear heads that the midnight masks;
And the strokes of the swords of the storm are as iron
On the steel of the wave-worn casques.

Be night's dark word as the word of a wizard
Be the word of dawn as a god's glad word
Like heads of the spirits of darkness visor
That see not forever, nor ever have heard
These basnets, plumed as for fight or plumeless,
Crowned of the storm and by storm discrowned,
Keep ward of the lists where the dead lie tombless
And the tale of them is not found.

Nor eye may number nor hand may reckon
The tithes that are taken of life by the dark,
Or the ways of the path, if doom's hand beckon,
For the soul to fare as a helmless bark—
Fare forth on a way that no sign showeth,
Nor aught of its goal or of aught between;
A path for her flight which no fowl knoweth,
Which the vulture's eye hath not seen.

Here still, though the wave and the wind seem lovers
Lulled half asleep by their own soft words,
A dream as of death in the sun's light hovers,
And a sign in the motions and cries of the birds.
Dark auguries and keen from the sweet sea-swallows
Strike noon with a sense as of midnight's breath,
And the wing that flees and the wing that follows
Are as types of the wings of death.

For here, when the night roars round, and under
The white sea lightens and leaps like fire,
Acclaimed of storm and applauded in thunder,
Sits death on the throne of his crowned desire.
Yea, hardly the hand of the god might fashion
A seat more strong for his strength to take
For the might of his heart and the pride of his passion
To rejoice in the wars they make.

When the heart in him brightens with blitheness of battle
And the depth of its thirst is fulfilled with strife,
And his ear with the ravage of bolts that rattle,
And the soul of death with the pride of life,
Till the darkness is loud with his dark thanksgiving
And wind and cloud are as chords of his hymn,
There is nought save death in the deep night living
And the whole night worships him.

Heaven's height bows down to him, signed with his token,
And the sea's depth, moved as a heart that yearns,
Heaves up to him, strong as a heart half broken,
A heart that breaks in a prayer that burns.
Of cloud is the shrine of his worship moulded,
But the altar therein is of sea-shaped stone,
Whereon, with the strength of his wide wings folded,
Sits death in the dark, alone.

He hears the word of his servant spoken,
The word that the wind his servant saith ;
Storm writes on the front of the night his token,
That the skies may seem to bow down to death.
But the clouds that stoop and the storms that minister
Serve but as thralls that fulfil their tasks ;
And his seal is not set save here on the sinister
Crests reared of the crownless casques.

Nor flame nor plume of the storm that crowned them
Gilds or quickens their stark black strength.
Life lightens and murmurs and laughs right round them,
At peace with the noon's whole breadth and length,
At one with the heart of the soft-souled heaven,
At one with the life of the kind wild land :
But its touch may unbrace not the strengths of the seven
Casques hewn of the storm-wind's hand.

No touch may loosen the black braced helmlets
For the wild elves' heads of the wild waves wrought.
As flowers on the sea are her small green realmlets,
Like heavens made out of a child's heart's thought ;
But these as thorns of her desolate places,
Strong fangs that fasten and hold lives fast :
And the vizors are framed as for formless faces
That a dark dream sees go past.

Of fear and of fate are the frontlets fashioned,
And the heads behind them are dire and dumb.
When the heart of the darkness is scarce impassioned,
Thrilled scarce with sense of the wrath to come,
They bear the sign from of old engraven,
Though peace be round them and strife seem far,
That here is none but the night-wind's haven,
With death for the harbor bar.

Of the iron of doom are the casquets carven,
That never the rivets thereof should burst.
When the heart of the darkness is hunger-starven,
And the throats of the gulfs are agape for thirst,
And stars are as flowers that the wind bids wither,
And dawn is as hope struck dead by fear,
The rage of the ravenous night sets hither,
And the crown of her work is here.

All shores about and afar lie lonely,
But lonelier are these than the heart of grief,
These loose-linked rivets of rock, whence only
Strange life scarce gleams from the sheer main reef,
With a blind wan face in the wild wan morning.
With a live lit flame on its brows by night,
That the lost may lose not its word's mute warning
And the blind by its grace have sight.

Here, walled in with the wide waste water,
Grew the grace of a girl's lone life,
The sea's and the sea-wind's foster-daughter,
And peace was hers in the main mid strife.
For her were the rocks clothed round with thunder,

And the crests of them carved by the storm-
smith's craft:
For her was the mid storm rent in sunder
As with passion that wailed and laughed.

For her the sunrise kindled and scattered
The red rose-leaflets of countless cloud:
For her the blasts of the springtide shattered
The strengths reluctant of waves back-
bowed.
For her would winds in the mid sky levy
Bright wars that hardly the night bade
cease:
At noon, when sleep on the sea lies heavy,
For her would the sun make peace.

Peace rose crowned with the dawn on golden
Lit leagues of triumph that flamed and
smiled:
Peace lay lulled in the moon-beholden
Warm darkness making the world's heart
mild.
For all the wide waves' troubles and treasons,
One word only her soul's ear heard
Speak from stormless and storm-rent seasons,
And ought save peace was the word.

All her life waxed large with the light of it,
All her heart fed full on the sound:
Spirit and sense were exalted in sight of it,
Compassed and girdled and clothed with
it round.
Sense was none but a strong still rapture,
Spirit was none but a joy sublime,
Of strength to curb and of craft to capture
The craft and the strength of Time.

Time lay bound as in painless prison
There, close in with a strait small space.
Never thereon as a strange light risen
Change had unveiled for her grief's far
face.
Three white walls flung out from the base-
ment
Girt the width of the world whereon
Gazing at night from her flame-lit casement
She saw where the dark sea shone.

Hardly the breadth of a few brief paces,
Hardly the length of a strong man's stride,
The small court flower-lit with children's
faces
Scarce held scope for a bird to hide.
Yet here was a man's brood reared and hidden
Between the rocks and the towers and the
foam
Where peril and pity and peace were bidden
As guests to the same sure home.

Here would pity keep watch for peril,
And surety comfort his heart with peace.
No flower save one, where the reefs lie sterile
Gave of the seed of its heart's increase.
Pity and surety and peace most lowly
Were the root and the stem and the bloom
of the flower:
And the light and the breath of the buds
kept holy
That maid's else blossomless bower.

With never a leaf but the seaweed's tangle,
Never a bird's but the seamew's note,
It heard all round it the strong storms wran-
gle,
Watched far past it the waste wrecks float
But her soul was stilled by the sky's endur-
ance,
And her heart made glad with the sea's
content;
And her faith waxed more in the sun's assur-
ance
For the winds that came and went.

Sweetness was brought for her forth of the
bitter
Sea's strength, and light of the deep sea's
dark,
From where green lawns on Alderney glitter
To the bastioned crags of the steeps of
Sark.
These she knew from afar beholden,
And marvelled haply what life would be
On moors that sunset and dawn leave golden,
In dells that smile on the sea.

And forth she fared as a stout-souled rover,
For a brief blithe raid on the bounding
brine:
And light winds ferried her light bark over
To the lone soft island of fair-limbed kine.
But the league-long length of its wild green
border,
And the small bright streets of serene St.
Anne,
Perplexed her sense with a strange disorder
At sight of the works of man.

The world was here, and the world's confu-
sion,
And the dust of the wheels of revolving
life,
Pain, labor, change, and the fierce illusion
Of strife more vain than the sea's old strife.
And her heart within her was vexed, and
dizzy
The sense of her soul as a wheel that
whirled:

She might not endure for a space that busy
Loud coil of the troublous world.

Too full, she said, was the world of trouble,
Too dense with noise of contentious things,
And shews less bright than the blithe foam's bubble
As home she fared on the smooth wind's wings.
For joy grows loftier in air more lonely,
Where only the sea's brood fain would be;
Where only the heart may receive in it only
The love of the heart of the sea.

A BALLAD OF SARK.

HIGH beyond the granite portal arched across
Like the gateway of some godlike giant's hold
Sweep and swell the billowy breasts of moor and moss
East and westward, and the dell their slopes enfold
Basks in purple, glows in green, exults in gold.
Glens that know the dove and fells that hear the lark
Fill with joy the rapturous island, as an ark
Full of spicery wrought from herb and flower and tree.
None would dream that grief even here may disembark
On the wrathful woful marge of earth and sea.

Rocks emblazoned like the mid shield's royal boss
Take the sun with all their blossom broad and bold.
None would dream that all this moorland's glow and gloss
Could be dark as tombs that strike the spirit acold
Even in eyes that opened here, and here behold
Now no sun relume from hope's belated spark
Any comfort, nor may ears of mourners hark
Though the ripe woods ring with golden-throated glee,
While the soul lies shattered, like a stranded bark
On the wrathful woful marge of earth and sea.

Death and doom are they whose crested triumphs toss
On the proud plumed waves whence mourning notes are tolled.
Wail of perfect woe and moan for utter loss
Raise the bride-song through the graveyard on the wold
Where the bride-bed keeps the bridegroom fast in mould.
Where the bride, with death for priest and doom for clerk,
Hears for choir the throats of waves like wolves that bark.
Sore anhungered, off the drear Eperquerie,
Fain to spoil the strongholds of the strength of Sark
On the wrathful woful marge of earth and sea.

Prince of storm and tempest, lord whose ways are dark,
Wind whose wings are spread for flight that none may mark,
Lightly dies the joy that lives by grace of thee.
Love through thee lies bleeding, hope lies cold and stark,
On the wrathful woful marge of earth and sea.

NINE YEARS OLD.

FEBRUARY 4, 1883.

I.

LORD of light, whose shrine no hands destroy,
God of song, whose hymn no tongue refuses,
Now, though spring far hence be cold and coy
Bid the golden mouths of all the Muses
Ring forth gold of strains without alloy,
Till the ninefold rapture that suffuses
Heaven with song bid earth exult for joy,
Since the child whose head this dawn bedews is
Sweet as once thy violet-cradled boy.

II.

Even as he lay lapped about with flowers,
Lies the life now nine years old before us
Lapped about with love in all its hours;
Hailed of many loves that chant in chorus
Loud or low from lush or leafless bowers,
Some from hearts exultant born sonorous,
Some scarce louder-voiced than soft-tongued showers

Two months hence, when spring's light wings poised o'er us
High shall hover, and her heart be ours.

III.

Even as he, though man-forsaken, smiled
On the soft kind snakes divinely bidden
There to feed him in the green mid-wild
Full with hurtless honey, till the hidden
Birth should prosper, finding fate more mild,
So full-fed with pleasures unforbidden,
So by love's lures blamelessly beguiled,
Laughs the nursling of our hearts unchidden
Yet by change that mars not yet the child.

IV.

Ah, not yet! Thou, lord of night and day,
Time, sweet father of such blameless pleasure,
Time, false friend who tak'st thy gifts away,
Spare us yet some scantlings of the treasure,
Leave us yet some rapture of delay,
Yet some bliss of blind and fearless leisure
Unprophetic of delight's decay,
Yet some nights and days wherein to measure
All the joys that bless us while they may.

V.

Not the waste Arcadian woodland, wet
Still with dawn and vocal with Alpheus,
Reared a nursling worthier love's regret,
Lord, than this, whose eyes beholden free us
Straight from bonds the soul would fain forget,
Fain cast off, that night and day might see us
Clear once more of life's vain fume and fret:
Leave us, then, whate'er thy doom decree us,
Yet some days wherein to love him yet.

VI.

Yet some days, wherein the child is ours,
Ours, not thine, O lord whose hand is o'er us
Always, as the sky with suns and showers
Dense and radiant, soundless or sonorous;
Yet some days for love's sake, ere the bowers
Fade wherein his fair first years kept chorus
Night and day with Graces robed like hours,
Ere this worshipped childhood wane before us,
Change, and bring forth fruit—but no more flowers.

VII.

Love we may the thing that is to be,
Love we must: but how forego this olden
Joy, this flower of childish love, that we
Held more dear than aught of Time is holden—
Time, whose laugh is like as Death's to see—
Time, who heeds not aught of all beholden,
Heard, or touched in passing—flower or tree,
Tares or grain of leaden days or golden—
More than wind has heed of ships at sea?

VIII.

First the babe, a very rose of joy,
Sweet as hope's first note of jubilation,
Passes: then must growth and change destroy
Next the child, and mar the consecration
Hallowing yet, ere thought or sense annoy,
Childhood's yet half heavenlike habitation,
Bright as truth and frailer than a toy;
Whence its guest with eager gratulation
Springs, and life grows larger round the boy.

IX.

Yet, ere sunrise wholly cease to shine,
Ere change come to chide our hearts, and scatter
Memories marked for love's sake with a sign,
Let the light of dawn beholden flatter
Yet some while our eyes that feed on thine,
Child, with love that change not time can shatter,
Love, whose silent song says more than mine
Now, though charged with elder loves and latter
Here it hails a lord whose years are nine.

AFTER A READING.

For the seven times seventh time love would renew the delight without end or alloy
That it takes in the praise as it takes in the presence of eyes that fulfil it with joy;
But how shall it praise them and rest unrebuked by the presence and pride of the boy?

Praise meet for a child is unmeet for an elder whose winters and springs are nine:
What song may have strength in its wings to expand them, or light in its eyes to shine,
That shall seem not as weakness and darkness if matched with the theme I would fain make mine?

The round little flower of a face that exults in
the sunshine of shadowless days
Defies the delight it enkindles to sing of it
aught not unfit for the praise
Of the sweetest of all things that eyes may re-
joice in and tremble with love as they gaze.

Such tricks and such meanings abound on the
lips and the brows that are brighter than
light,
The demure little chin, the sedate little nose,
and the forehead of sun-stained white,
That love overflows into laughter and laughter
subsides into love at the sight.

Each limb and each feature has action in tune
with the meaning that smiles as its speaks
From the fervor of eyes and the fluttering
of hands in a foretaste of fancies and
freaks,
When the thought of them deepens the dimples
that laugh in the corners and curves of his
cheeks.

As a bird when the music within her is yet too
intense to be spoken in song,
That pauses a little for pleasure to feel how
the notes from withinwards throng,
So pauses the laugh at his lips for a little, and
waxes within more strong.

As the music elate and triumphal that bids
all things of the dawn bear part
With the tune that prevails when her passion
has risen into rapture of passionate art.
So lightens the laughter made perfect that
leaps from its nest in the heaven of his
heart.

Deep, grave and sedate is the gaze of expect-
ant intensity bent for a while.
And absorbed on its aim as the tale that en-
thralls him uncovers the weft of its wile,
Till the goal of attention is touched, and
expectancy kisses delight in a smile.

And it seems to us here that in Paradise hardly
the spirit of Lamb or of Blake
May hear or behold aught sweeter than
lightens and rings when his bright thoughts
break
In laughter that well might lure them to look,
and to smile as of old for his sake.

O singers that best loved children, and best
for their sakes are beloved of us here,
In the world of your life everlasting, where
love has no thorn and desire has no fear,
All else may be sweeter than aught is on
earth, nought dearer than these are dear.

MAYTIME IN MIDWINTER.

A NEW year gleams on us, tearful
And troubled and smiling dim
As the smile on a lip still fearful,
As glances of eyes that swim:
But the bird of my heart makes cheerful
The days that are bright for him.

Child, how may a man's love merit
The grace you shed as you stand,
The gift that is yours to inherit?
Through you are the bleak days bland;
Your voice is a light to my spirit;
You bring the sun in your hand.

The year's wing shows not a feather
As yet of the plumes to be;
Yet here in the shrill gray weather
The spring's self stands at my knee,
And laughs as we commune together,
And lightens the world we see.

The rains are as dews for the christening
Of dawns that the nights benumb:
The spring's voice answers me listening
For speech of a child to come,
While promise of music is glistening
On lips that delight keeps dumb.

The mists and the storms receding
At sight of you smile and die:
Your eyes held wide on me reading
Shed summer across the sky:
Your heart shines clear for me, heeding
No more of the world than I.

The world, what is it to you, dear,
And me, if its face be gray,
And the new-born year be a shrewd year
For flowers that the fierce winds fray?
You smile, and the sky seems blue, dear;
You laugh, and the month turns May.

Love cares not for care, he has daffed her
Aside as a mate for guile:
The sight that my soul yearns after
Feeds full my sense for awhile;
Your sweet little sun-faced laughter,
Your good little glad grave smile.

Your hands through the bookshelves flutter;
Scott, Shakespeare, Dickens, are caught;
Blake's visions, that lighten and mutter;
Molière—and his smile has nought
Left on it of sorrow, to utter
The secret things of his thought.

No grim thing written or graven
But grows, if you gaze on it, bright;
A lark's note rings from the raven,
And tragedy's robe turns white;
And shipwrecks drift into haven;
And darkness laughs, and is light.

Grief seems but a vision of madness;
Life's key-note peals from above
With nought in it more of sadness
Than broods on the heart of a dove:
At sight of you, thought grows gladness,
And life, through love of you, love.

A DOUBLE BALLAD OF AUGUST.

(1884.)

All Afric, winged with death and fire,
Pants in our pleasant English air.
Each blade of grass is tense as wire,
And all the wood's loose trembling hair
Stark in the broad and breathless glare
Of hours whose touch wastes herb and tree.
This bright sharp death shines everywhere;
Life yearns for solace toward the sea.

Earth seems a corpse upon the pyre;
The sun, a scourge for slaves to bear.
All power to fear, all keen desire,
Lies dead as dreams of days that were
Before the new-born world lay bare
In heaven's wide eye, whereunder we
Lie breathless till the season spare:
Life yearns for solace toward the sea.

Fierce hours, with ravening fangs that tire
On spirit and sense, divide and share
The throbs of thoughts that scarce respire,
The throes of dreams that scarce forbear
One mute immitigable prayer
For cold perpetual sleep to be
Shed snowlike on the sense of care.
Life yearns for solace toward the sea.

The dust of ways where men suspire
Seems even the dust of death's dim lair.
But though the feverish days be dire
The sea-wind rears and cheers its fair
Blithe broods of babes that here and there
Make the sands laugh and glow for glee
With gladder flowers than gardens wear.
Life yearns for solace toward the sea.

The music dies not off the lyre
That lets no soul alive despair.
Sleep strikes not dumb the breathless choir
Of waves whose note bids sorrow spare.
As glad they sound, as fast they fare,
As when fate's word first set them free
And gave them light and night to wear.
Life yearns for solace toward the sea.

For there, though night and day conspire
To compass round with toil and snare
And changeless whirl of change, whose gyre
Draws all things deathwards unaware,
The spirit of life they scourge and scare,
Wild waves that follow on waves that flee
Laugh, knowing that yet, though earth despair
Life yearns for solace toward the sea.

HEARTSEASE COUNTRY.

TO ISABEL SWINBURNE.

The far green westward heavens are bland,
The far green Wiltshire downs are clear
As these deep meadows hard at hand:
The sight knows hardly far from near,
Nor morning joy from evening cheer.
In cottage garden-plots their bees
Find many a fervent flower to seize
And strain and drain the heart away
From ripe sweet-williams and sweet-peas
At every turn on every way.

But gladliest seems one flower to expand
Its whole sweet heart all round us here;
'Tis Heartsease Country, Pansy Land.
Nor sounds nor savors harsh and drear
Where engines yell and halt and veer
Can vex the sense of him who sees
One flower-plot midway, that for trees
Has poles, and sheds all grimed or gray
For bowers like those that take the breeze
At every turn on every way.

Content even there they smile and stand,
Sweet thought's heart-easing flowers, not
fear.
With reek and roaring steam though fanned,
Nor shrink nor perish as they peer.
The heart's eye holds not those more dear

That glow between the lanes and leas
Where'er the homeliest hand may please
To bid them blossom as they may
Where light approves and wind agrees
At every turn on every way.

Sister, the word of winds and seas
Endures not as the word of these
Your wayside flowers whose breath would say
How hearts that love may find heart's ease
At every turn on every way.

A BALLAD OF APPEAL.

TO CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI.

Song wakes with every wakening year
From hearts of birds that only feel
Brief spring's deciduous flower-time near:
And song more strong to help or heal
Shall silence worse than winter seal?
From love-lit thought's remurmuring cave
The notes that rippled, wave on wave,
Were clear as love, as faith were strong;
And all souls blessed the soul that gave
Sweet water from the well of song.

All hearts bore fruit of joy to hear,
All eyes felt mist upon them steal
For joy's sake, trembling toward a tear,
When, loud as marriage-bells that peal,
Or flutelike soft, or keen like steel,
Sprang the sheer music; sharp or grave,
We heard the drift of winds that drave,
And saw, swept round by ghosts in throng,
Dark rocks, that yielded, where they clave,
Sweet water from the well of song.

Blithe verse made all the dim sense clear
That smiles of babbling babes conceal:
Prayer's perfect heart spake here: and here
Rose notes of blameless woe and weal,
More soft than this poor song's appeal.
Where orchards bask, where cornfields wave,
They dropped like rains that cleanse and lave,
And scattered all the year along,
Like dewfall on an April grave,
Sweet water from the well of song.

Ballad, go bear our prayer, and crave
Pardon, because thy lowlier stave
Can do this plea no right, but wrong.
Ask nought beside thy pardon, save
Sweet water from the well of song.

CRADLE SONGS.

(To a tune of Blake's.)

I.

Baby, baby bright,
Sleep can steal from sight
Little of your light:

Soft as fire in dew.
Still the life in you
Lights your slumber through.

Four white eyelids keep
Fast the seal of sleep
Deep as love is deep:

Yet, though closed it lies,
Love behind them spies
Heaven in two blue eyes.

II.

Baby, baby dear,
Earth and heaven are near
Now, for heaven is here.

Heaven is every place
Where your flower-sweet face
Fills our eyes with grace.

Till your own eyes deign
Earth a glance again,
Earth and heaven are twain.

Now your sleep is done,
Shine, and show the sun
Earth and heaven are one.

III.

Baby, baby sweet,
Love's own lips are meet
Scarce to kiss your feet.

Hardly love's own ear,
When your laugh crows clear,
Quite deserves to hear.

Hardly love's own wile,
Though it please awhile,
Quite deserves your smile.

Baby full of grace,
Bless us yet a space:
Sleep will come apace.

IV.

Baby, baby true,
Man, whate'er he do,
May deceive not you.

Smiles whose love is guile,
Worn a flattering while,
Win from you no smile.

One, the smile alone
Out of love's heart grown,
Ever wins your own.

Man, a dunce uncouth,
Errs in age and youth:
Babies know the truth.

V.

Baby, baby fair,
Love is fain to dare
Bless your haughtiest air.

Baby blithe and bland,
Reach but forth a hand
None may dare withstand;

Love, though wellnigh cowed,
Yet would praise aloud
Pride so sweetly proud.

No! the fitting word
Even from breeze or bird
Never yet was heard.

VI.

Baby, baby kind,
Though no word we find
Bear us yet in mind.

Half a little hour,
Baby bright in bower,
Keep this thought aflower—

Love it is, I see,
Here with heart and knee
Bows and worships me.

What can baby do,
Then, for love so true?—
Let it worship you.

VII.

Baby, baby wise,
Love's divine surmise
Lights your constant eyes.

Day and night and day
One mute word would they,
As the soul saith, say.

Trouble comes and goes;
Wonder ebbs and flows;
Love remains and glows.

As the fledgeling dove
Feels the breast above.
So your heart feels love.

PELAGIUS.

I.

THE sea shall praise him and the shores bear part
That reared him when the bright south world was black
With fume of creeds more foul than hell's own rack,
Still darkening more love's face with loveless art
Since Paul, faith's fervent Antichrist, of heart
Heroic, haled the world vehemently back
From Christ's pure path on dire Jehovah's track,
And said to dark Elisha's Lord, 'Thou art.'
But one whose soul had put the raiment on
Of love that Jesus left with James and John
Withstood that Lord whose seals of love were lies,
Seeing what we see—how, touched by Truth's bright rod,
The fiend whom Jews and Africans called God
Feels his own hell take hold on him and dies.

II.

The world has no such flower in any land,
And no such pearl in any gulf the sea,
As any babe on any mother's knee.
But all things blessed of men by saints are banned:
God gives them grace to read and understand
The palimpsest of evil, writ where we,
Poor fools and lovers but of love, can see
Nought save a blessing signed by Love's own hand.
The smile that opens heaven on us for them
Hath sin's transmitted birthmark hid therein:

The kiss it craves calls down from heaven a rod.
If innocence be sin that Gods condemn,
Praise we the men who so being born in sin
First dared the doom and broke the bonds of God.

III.

Man's heel is on the Almighty's neck who said,
Let there be hell, and there was hell—on earth.
But not for that may men forget their worth—
Nay, but much more remember them—who led
The living first from dwellings of the dead,
And rent the cerecloths that were wont to engirth
Souls wrapped and swathed and swaddled from their birth
With lies that bound them fast from heel to head.
Among the tombs when wise men all their lives
Dwelt, and cried out, and cut themselves with knives,
These men, being foolish, and of saints abhorred,
Beheld in heaven the sun by saints reviled,
Love, and on earth one everlasting Lord
In every likeness of a little child.

LOUIS BLANC.

THREE SONNETS TO HIS MEMORY.

I.

THE stainless soul that smiled through glorious eyes;
The bright grave brow whereon dark fortune's blast
Might blow, but might not bend it, nor o'ercast,
Save for one fierce fleet hour of shame, the skies
Thrilled with warm dreams of worthier days to rise
And end the whole world's winter; here at last,
If death be death, have passed into the past;
If death be life, live, though their semblance dies.
Hope and high faith inviolate of distrust
Shone strong as life inviolate of the grave
Through each bright word and lineament serene.
Most loving righteousness and love most just
Crowned, as day crowns the dawn-enkindled wave,
With visible aureole thine unfaltering mien.

II.

Strong time and fire-swift change, with lightnings clad
And shod with thunders of reverberate years,
Have filled with light and sound of hopes and fears
The space of many a season, since I had
Grace of good hap to make my spirit glad,
Once communing with thine: and memory hears
The bright voice yet that then rejoiced mine ears,
Sees yet the light of eyes that spake, and bade
Fear not, but hope, though then time's heart were weak
And heaven by hell shade-stricken, and the range
Of high-born hope made questionable and strange
As twilight trembling till the sunlight speak.
Thou sawest the sunrise and the storm in one
Break: seest thou now the storm-compelling sun?

III.

Surely thou seest, O spirit of light and fire,
Surely thou canst not choose, O soul, but see
The days whose dayspring was beheld of thee
Ere eyes less pure might have their hope's desire,
Beholding life in heaven again respire
Where men saw nought that was or was to be,
Save only death imperial. Thou and he
Who has the heart of all men's hearts for lyre,
Ye twain, being great of spirit as time is great,
And sure of sight as truth's own heavenward eye,

Beheld the forms of forces passing by
And certitude of equal-balanced fate,
Whose breath foretelt makes darkness palpitate,
And knew that light should live and darkness die.

VOS DEOS LAUDAMUS:

THE CONSERVATIVE JOURNALIST'S ANTHEM.

'As a matter of fact, no man living, or who ever lived — not CÆSAR or PERICLES, not SHAKESPEARE or MICHAEL ANGELO—could confer honor more than he took on entering the House of Lords.'—*Saturday Review*, December 15, 1883.

'Clumsy and shallow snobbery—can do no hurt.'—*Ibid.*

I.

O LORDS our Gods, beneficent, sublime,
In the evening, and before the morning flames,
We praise, we bless, we magnify your names.
The slave is he that serves not, his the crime
And shame, who hails not as the crown of Time
That House wherein the all-envious world acclaims
Such glory that the reflex of it shames
All crowns bestowed of men for prose or rhyme.
The serf, the cur, the sycophant is he
Who feels no cringing motion twitch his knee
When from a height too high for Shakespeare nods
The wearer of a higher than Milton's crown.
Stoop, Chaucer, stoop: Keats, Shelley, Burns, bow down:
These have no part with you, O Lords our Gods.

II.

O Lords our Gods, it is not that ye sit
Serene above the thunder, and exempt
From strife of tongues and casualties that tempt
Men merely found by proof of manhood fit
For service of their fellows: this is it
Which sets you past the reach of Time's attempt,
Which gives us right of justified contempt
For commonwealths built up by mere men's wit:
That gold unlocks not, nor may flatteries ope,
The portals of your heaven; that none may hope
With you to watch how life beneath you plods,
Save for high service given, high duty done;
That never was your rank ignobly won:
For this we give you praise, O Lords our Gods.

III.

O Lords our Gods, the times are evil: you
Redeem the time, because of evil days.
While abject souls in servitude of praise
Bow down to heads untitled, and the crew
Whose honor dwells but in the deeds they do,
From loftier hearts your nobler servants raise
More manful salutation: yours are bays
That not the dawn's plebeian pearls bedew;
Yours, laurels plucked not of such hands as wove
Old age its chaplet in Colonos' grove.
Our time, with heaven and with itself at odds,
Makes all lands else as seas that seethe and boil;
But yours are yet the corn and wine and oil,
And yours our worship yet, O Lords our Gods.

ON THE BICENTENARY OF CORNEILLE,

CELEBRATED UNDER THE PRESIDENCY OF VICTOR HUGO.

SCARCE two hundred years are gone, and the world is past away
As a noise of brawling wind, as a flash of breaking foam,
That beheld the singer born who raised from the dead of Rome;
And a mightier now than he bids him too rise up to-day.
All the dim great age is dust, and its king is tombless clay,
But its loftier laurel green as in living eyes it clomb,
And his memory whom it crowned hath his people's hearts for home,
And the shade across it falls of a lordlier-flowering bay.

Stately shapes about the tomb of their mighty maker pace,
Heads of high-plumed Spaniards shine, souls revive of Roman race,
Sound of arms and words of wail through the glowing darkness rise,
Speech of hearts heroic rings forth of lips that know not breath,
And the light of thoughts august fills the pride of kindling eyes
Whence of yore the spell of song drove the shadow of darkling death.

IN SEPULCRETIS.

'Vidistis ipso rapere de rogo cœnam.'—CATULLUS, LIX. 3.

'To publish even one line of an author which he himself has not intended for the public at large—especially letters which are addressed to private persons—is to commit a despicable act of felony.'—HEINE.

I.

It is not then enough that men who give
The best gift given of man to man should feel,
Alive, a snake's head ever at their heel:
Small hurt the worms may do them while they live—
Such hurt as scorn for scorn's sake may forgive.
But now, when death and fame have set one seal
On tombs whereat Love, Grief, and Glory kneel,
Men sift all secrets, in their critic sieve,
Of graves wherein the dust of death might shrink
To know what tongues defile the dead man's name
With loathsome love, and praise that stings like shame.
Rest once was theirs, who had crossed the mortal brink:
No rest, no reverence now: dull fools undress
Death's holiest shrine, life's veriest nakedness.

II.

A man was born, sang, suffered, loved, and died.
Men scorned him living: let us praise him dead.
His life was brief and bitter, gently led
And proudly, but with pure and blameless pride.
He wrought no wrong toward any; satisfied
With love and labor, whence our souls are fed
With largesse yet of living wine and bread.
Come, let us praise him: here is nought to hide.
Make bare the poor dead secrets of his heart,
Strip the stark-naked soul, that all may peer,
Spy, smirk, sniff, snap, snort, snivel, snarl and sneer:
Let none so sad, let none so sacred part
Lie still for pity, rest unstirred for shame,
But all be scanned of all men. This is fame.

III.

'Now, what a thing it is to be an ass!'*
If one, that strutted up the brawling streets
As foreman of the flock whose concourse greets
Men's ears with bray more dissonant than brass,
Would change from blame to praise as coarse and crass
His natural note, and learn the fawning feats
Of lapdogs, who but knows what luck he meets?
But all in vain old fable holds her glass.

Mocked and reviled by men of poisonous breath,
A great man dies: but one thing worst was spared;
Not all his heart by their base hands lay bared.
One comes to crown with praise the dust of death;
And lo, through him this worst is brought to pass.
Now, what a thing it is to be an ass!

IV.

Shame, such as never yet dealt heavier stroke
On heads more shameful, fall on theirs through whom
Dead men may keep inviolate not their tomb,
But all its depths these ravenous grave-worms choke.
And yet what waste of wrath were this, to invoke

* *Titus Andronicus*, Act iv., Scene 2.

Shame on the shameless? Even their twin-born doom,
Their native air of life, a carrion fume,
Their natural breath of love, a noisome smoke,
The bread they break, the cup whereof they drink,
The record whose remembrance damns their name,
Smells, tastes, and sounds of nothing but of shame.
If thankfulness nor pity bids them think
What work is this of theirs, and pause betimes,
Not Shakespeare's grave would scare them off with rhymes.

LOVE AND SCORN.

I.

LOVE, loyallest and lordliest born of things,
Immortal that shouldst be, though all else end,
In plighted hearts of fearless friend with friend,
Whose hand may curb or clip thy plume-plucked wings?
Not grief's nor time's: though these be lords and kings
Crowned, and their yoke bid vassal passions bend,
They may not pierce the spirit of sense, or blend
Quick poison with the soul's live watersprings.
The true clear heart whose core is manful trust
Fears not that very death may turn to dust
Love lit therein as toward a brother born,
If one touch make not all its fine gold rust,
If one breath blight not all its glad ripe corn,
And all its fire be turned to fire of scorn.

II.

Scorn only, scorn begot of bitter proof
By keen experience of a trustless heart,
Bears burning in her new-born hand the dart
Wherewith love dies heart-stricken, and the roof
Falls of his palace, and the storied woof
Long woven of many a year with life's whole art
Is rent like any rotten weed apart,
And hardly with reluctant eyes aloof
Cold memory guards one relic scarce exempt
Yet from the fierce corrosion of contempt,
And hardly saved by pity. Woe are we
That once we loved, and love not; but we know
The ghost of love, surviving yet in show.
Where scorn has passed, is vain as grief must be.

III.

O sacred, just, inevitable scorn,
Strong child of righteous judgment, whom with grief
The rent heart bears, and wins not yet relief,
Seeing of its pain so dire a portent born,
Must thou not spare one sheaf of all the corn,
One doit of all the treasure? not one sheaf,
Not one poor doit of all? not one dead leaf
Of all that fell and left behind a thorn?
Is man so strong that one should scorn another?
Is any as God, not made of mortal mother,
That love should turn in him to gall and flame?
Nay: but the true is not the false heart's brother:
Love cannot love disloyalty: the name
That else it wears is love no more, but shame.

ON THE DEATH OF RICHARD DOYLE.

A LIGHT of blameless laughter, fancy-bred,
Soft-souled and glad and kind as love or sleep,
Fades, and sweet mirth's own eyes are fain to weep
Because her blithe and gentlest bird is dead.
Weep, elves and fairies all, that never shed
Tear yet for mortal mourning: you that keep
The doors of dreams whence naught of ill may creep,
Mourn once for one whose lips your honey fed.
Let waters of the Golden River steep
The rose-roots whence his grave blooms rosy-red
And murmuring of Hyblæan hives be deep
About the summer silence of its bed,
And nought less gracious than a violet peep
Between the grass grown greener round his head.

IN MEMORY OF HENRY A. BRIGHT.

YET again another, ere his crowning year,
Gone from friends that here may look for him no more,
Never now for him shall hope set wide the door,
Hope that hailed him hither, fain to greet him here.
All the gracious garden-flowers he held so dear,
Oldworld English blossoms, all his homestead store,
Oldworld grief had strewn them round his bier of yore,
Bidding each drop leaf by leaf as tear by tear;
Rarer lutes than mine had borne more tuneful token.
Touched by subtler hands than echoing time can wrong,
Sweet as flowers had strewn his graveward path along.
Now may no such old sweet dirges more be spoken.
Now the flowers whose breath was very song are broken,
Nor may sorrow find again so sweet a song.

A SOLITUDE.

SEA beyond sea, sand after sweep of sand,
Here ivory smooth, here cloven and ridged with flow
Of channelled waters soft as rain or snow,
Stretch their lone length at ease beneath the bland
Gray gleam of skies whose smile on wave and strand
Shines weary like a man's who smiles to know
That now no dream can mock his faith with show,
Nor cloud for him seem living sea or land.

Is there an end at all of all this waste,
These crumbling cliffs defeatured and defaced,
These ruinous heights of sea-sapped walls that slide
Seaward with all their banks of bleak blown flowers
Glad yet of life, ere yet their hope subside
Beneath the coil of dull dense waves and hours?

VICTOR HUGO: L'ARCHIPEL DE LA MANCHE.

SEA and land are fairer now, nor aught is all the same,
Since a mightier hand than Time's hath woven their votive wreath.
Rocks as swords half drawn from out the smooth wave's jewelled sheath,
Fields whose flowers a tongue divine hath numbered name by name,
Shores whereby the midnight or the noon clothed round with flame
Hears the clamor jar and grind whic' utters from beneath
Cries of hungering waves like beasts fast bound that gnash their teeth,
All of these the sun that lights them lights not like his fame;
None of these is but the thing it was before he came.
Where the darkling overfalls like dens of torment seethe,
High on tameless moorlands, down in meadows bland and tame,
Where the garden hides, and where the wind uproots the heath,
Glory now henceforth forever, while the world shall be,
Shines, a star that keeps not time with change on earth and sea.

THE TWILIGHT OF THE LORDS.

I.

Is the sound a trumpet blown, or a bell for burial tolled,
Whence the whole air vibrates now to the clash of words like swords—
'Let us break their bonds in sunder, and cast away their cords;
Long enough the world has mocked us, and marvelled to behold
How the grown man bears the curb whence his boyhood was controlled?'
Nay, but hearken: surer counsel more sober speech affords:
'Is the past not all inscribed with the praises of our Lords?
Is the memory dead of deeds done of yore, the love grown cold
That should bind our hearts to trust in their counsels wise and bold?
These that stand against you now, senseless crowds and heartless hordes,

Are not these the sons of men that withstood
your kings of old?
Theirs it is to bind and loose; theirs the
key that knows the wards,
Theirs the staff to lead or smite; yours, the
spades and ploughs and hods:
Theirs to hear and yours to cry, Power is
Yours, O Lords our Gods.'

II.

Hear, O England: these are they that would
counsel thee aright.
Wouldst thou fain have all thy sons sons of
thine indeed, and free?
Nay, but then no more at all as thou hast
been shalt thou be:
Needs must many dwell in darkness, that
some may look on light;
Needs must poor men brook the wrong that
ensures the rich man's right.
How shall kings and lords be worshipped,
if no man bow the knee?
How, if no man worship these, may thy
praise endure with thee?
How, except thou trust in these, shall thy
name not lose its might?
These have had their will of thee since the
Norman came to smite:
Sires on grandsires, even as wave after
wave along the sea,
Sons on sires have followed, steadfast as
clouds or hours in flight.
Time alone hath power to say, time alone
hath eyes to see,
If your walls of rule be built but of clay-compacted sods,
If your place of old shall know you no more,
O Lords our Gods.

III.

Through the stalls wherein ye sit sounds a
sentence while we wait,
Set your house in order: is it not builded
on the sand?
Set your house in order, seeing the night is
hard at hand.
As the twilight of the Gods in the northern
dream of fate
Is this hour that comes against you, albeit
this hour come late.
Ye whom Time and Truth bade heed, and
ye would not understand,
Now an axe draws nigh the tree overshadowing all the land,
And its edge of doom is set to the root of all
your state.
Light is more than darkness now, faith than
fear and hope than hate;
And what morning wills, behold, all the
night shall not withstand.
Rods of office, helms of rule, staffs of wise
men, crowns of great.
While the people willed, ye bare; now
their hopes and hearts expand,
Time with silent foot makes dust of your
broken crowns and rods,
And the lordship of your godhead is gone, O
Lords our Gods.

CLEAR THE WAY!

CLEAR the way, my lords and lackeys! you
have had your day.
Here you have your answer—England's yea
against your nay:
Long enough your house has held you: up,
and clear the way!

Lust and falsehood, craft and traffic, precedent and gold,
Tongue of courtier, kiss of harlot, promise
bought and sold,
Gave you heritage of empire over thralls of
old.

Now that all these things are rotten, all their
gold is rust,
Quenched the pride they lived by, dead the
faith and cold the lust,
Shall their heritage not also turn again to
dust?

By the grace of these they reigned, who left
their sons their sway:
By the grace of these, what England says her
lords unsay:
Till at last her cry go forth against them—
Clear the way!

By the grace of trust in treason knaves have
lived and lied:
By the force of fear and folly fools have fed
their pride:
By the strength of sloth and custom reason
stands defied.

Lest perchance your reckoning on some latter
day be worse,
Halt and hearken, lords of lands and princes
of the purse,
Ere the tide be full that comes with blessing
and with curse.

Where we stand, as where you sit, scarce falls a sprinkling spray;
But the wind that swells, the wave that follows, none shall stay:
Spread no more of sail for shipwreck: out, and clear the way!

A WORD FOR THE COUNTRY.

MEN, born of the land that for ages
Has been honored where freedom was dear,
Till your labor wax fat on its wages
You shall never be peers of a peer.
Where might is, the right is:
Long purses make strong swords.
Let weakness learn meekness;
God save the House of Lords!

You are free to consume in stagnation:
You are equal in right to obey:
You are brothers in bonds, and the nation
Is your mother—whose sons are her prey.
Those others your brothers,
Who toil not, weave, nor till,
Refuse you and use you
As waiters on their will.

But your fathers bowed down to their masters
And obeyed them and served and adored.
Shall the sheep not give thanks to their pastors?
Shall the serf not give praise to his lord?
Time, waning and gaining,
Grown other now than then,
Needs pastors and masters
For sheep, and not for men.

If his grandsire did service in battle,
If his grandam was kissed by a king,
Must men to my lord be as cattle
Or as apes that he leads in a string?
To deem so, to dream so,
Would bid the world proclaim
The dastards for bastards,
Not heirs of England's fame.

Not in spite but in right of dishonor,
There are actors who trample your boards
Till the earth that endures you upon her
Grows weary to bear you, my lords.
Your token is broken,
It will not pass for gold:
Your glory looks hoary,
Your sun in heaven turns cold.

They are worthy to reign on their brothers,
So contemn them as clods and as carles,
Who are Graces by grace of such mothers
As brightened the bed of King Charles.
What manner of banner,
What fame is this they flaunt,
That Britain, soul-smitten,
Should shrink before their vaunt?

Bright sons of sublime prostitution,
You are made of the mire of the street
Where your grandmothers walked in pollution
Till a coronet shone at their feet.
Your Graces, whose faces
Bear high the bastard's brand,
Seem stronger no longer
Than all this honest land.

But the sons of her soldiers and seamen,
They are worthy forsooth of their hire.
If the father won praise from all free men,
Shall the sons not exult in their sire?
Let money make sunny
And power make proud their lives,
And feed them and breed them
Like drones in drowsiest hives.

But if haply the name be a burden
And the souls be no kindred of theirs,
Should wise men rejoice in such guerdon
Or brave men exult in such heirs?
Or rather the father
Frown, shamefaced on the son,
And no men but foemen,
Deriding, cry 'Well done'?

Let the gold and the land they inherit
Pass ever from hand into hand:
In right of the forefather's merit
Let the gold be the son's, and the land.
Soft raiment, rich payment,
High place, the state affords;
Full measure of pleasure:
But now no more, my lords,

Is the future beleaguered with dangers
If the poor be far other than slaves?
Shall the sons of the land be as strangers
In the land of their forefathers' graves?
Shame were it to bear it,
And shame it were to see:
If free men you be, men,
Let proof proclaim you free.

'But democracy means dissolution:
See, laden with clamor and crime,
How the darkness of dim revolution

Comes deepening the twilight of time!'
Ah, better the fetter
That holds the poor man's hand
Than peril of sterile
Blind change that wastes the land.

'Gaze forward through clouds that environ;
It shall be as it was in the past:
Not with dreams, but with blood and with iron,
Shall a nation be moulded to last.'
So teach they, so preach they,
Who dream themselves the dream
That hallows the gallows
And bids the scaffold stream.

'With a hero at head, and a nation
Well gagged and well drilled and well cowed,
And a gospel of war and damnation,
Has not empire a right to be proud?'
Fools prattle and tattle
Of freedom, reason, right,
The beauty of duty,
The loveliness of light.

'But we know, we believe it, we see it,
Force only has power upon earth.'
So be it! and ever so be it
For souls that are bestial by birth!
Let Prussian with Russian
Exchange the kiss of slaves:
But sea-folk are free folk
By grace of winds and waves.

Has the past from the sepulchres beckoned?
Let answer from Englishmen be—
No man shall be lord of us reckoned
Who is baser, not better, than we.
No coward, empowered
To soil a brave man's name:
For shame's sake and fame's sake,
Enough of fame and shame.

Fame needs not the golden addition;
Shame bears it abroad as a brand.
Let the deed, and no more the tradition,
Speak out and be heard through the land.
Pride, rootless and fruitless,
No longer takes and gives:
But surer and purer
The soul of England lives.

He is master and lord of his brothers
Who is worthier and wiser than they.
Him only, him surely, shall others,
Else equal, observe and obey.
Truth, flawless and awless,
Do falsehood what it can,
Makes royal the loyal
And simple heart of man.

Who are these, then, that England should hearken,
Who rage and wax wroth and grow pale
If she turn from the sunsets that darken
And her ship for the morning set sail?
Let strangers fear dangers:
All know, that hold her dear,
Dishonor upon her
Can only fall through fear.

Men, born of the landsmen and seamen
Who served her with souls and with swords,
She bids you be brothers, and free men,
And lordless, and fearless of lords.
She cares not, she dares not
Care now for gold or steel:
Light lead her, truth speed her,
God save the Commonweal!

A WORD FOR THE NATION.

I.

A WORD across the water
Against our ears is borne,
Of threatenings and of slaughter,
Of rage and spite and scorn:
We have not, alack, an ally to befriend us,
And the season is ripe to extirpate and end us:
Let the German touch hands with the Gaul,
And the fortress of England must fall;
And the sea shall be swept of her seamen,
And the waters they ruled be their graves,
And Dutchmen and Frenchmen be free men,
And Englishmen slaves.

II.

Our time once more is over,
Once more our end is near;
A bull without a drover,
The Briton reels to rear,
And the van of the nations is held by his betters,
And the seas of the world shall be loosed from his fetters,
And his glory shall pass as a breath,
And the life that is in him be death:
And the sepulchre sealed on his glory
For a sign to the nations shall be
As of Tyre and of Carthage in story,
Once lords of the sea.

III.

The lips are wise and loyal,
The hearts are brave and true,
Imperial thoughts and royal
Make strong the clamorous crew,
Whence louder and prouder the noise of defiance
Rings rage from the grave of a trustless alliance,
And bids us beware and be warned,
As abhorred of all nations and scorned,
As a swordless and spiritless nation,
A wreck on the waste of the waves.
So foams the released indignation
Of masterless slaves.

IV.

Brute throats that miss the collar,
Bowed backs that ask the whip,
Stretched hands that lack the dollar,
And many a lie-seared lip,
Forefeel and foreshow for us signs as funereal
As the signs that were regal of yore and imperial ;
We shall pass as the princes they served,
We shall reap what our fathers deserved,
And the place that was England's be taken
By one that is worthier than she,
And the yoke of her empire be shaken
Like spray from the sea.

V.

French hounds, whose necks are aching
Still from the chain they crave,
In dog-day madness breaking
The dog-leash, thus may rave :
But the seas that for ages have fostered and fenced her
Laugh, echoing the yell of their kennel against her
And their moan if destruction draw near them
And the roar of her laughter to hear them ;
For she knows that if Englishmen be men
Their England has all that she craves ;
All love and all honor from free men,
All hatred from slaves.

VI.

All love that rests upon her
Like sunshine and sweet air,
All light of perfect honor
And praise than ends in prayer,
She wins not more surely, she wears not more proudly,
Than the token of tribute that clatters thus loudly,
The tribute of foes when they meet
That rattles and rings at her feet,
The tribute of rage and of rancor,
The tribute of slaves to the free,
To the people whose hope hath its anchor
Made fast in the sea.

VII.

No fool that bows the back he
Feels fit for scourge or brand,
No scurril scribes that lackey
The lords of Lackeyland,
No penman that yearns, as he turns on his pallet,
For the place or the pence of a peer or a valet,
No whelp of as currish a pack
As the litter whose yelp it gives back,
Though he answer the cry of his brother
As echoes might answer from caves,
Shall be witness as though for a mother
Whose children were slaves.

VIII.

But those found fit to love her,
Whose love has root in faith,
Who hear, though darkness cover
Time's face, what memory saith.
Who seek not the service of great men or small men
But the weal that is common for comfort of all men,
Those yet that in trust have beholden
Truth's dawn over England grow golden
And quicken the darkness that stagnates
And scatter the shadows that flee,
Shall reply for her meanest as magnates
And masters by sea.

IX.

And all shall mark her station,
Her message all shall hear,
When, equal-eyed, the nation
Bids all her sons draw near,
And freedom be more than tradition or faction,
And thought be no swifter to serve her than action,
And justice alone be above her,
That love may be prouder to love her,
And time on the crest of her story
Inscribe, as remembrance engraves,
The sign that subdues with its glory
Kings, princes, and slaves.

A WORD FROM THE PSALMIST.

Ps. xciv. 8.

I.

TAKE heed, ye unwise among the people:
O ye fools, when will ye understand?'
From pulpit or choir beneath the steeple,
Though the words be fierce, the tones are bland.
But a louder than the Church's echo thunders
In the ears of men who may not choose but hear;
And the heart in him that hears it leaps and wonders,
With triumphant hope astonished, or with fear.
For the names whose sound was power awaken
Neither love nor reverence now nor dread;
Their strongholds and shrines are stormed and taken,
Their kingdom and all its works are dead.

II.

Take heed: for the tide of time is risen:
It is full not yet, though now so high
That spirits and hopes long pent in prison
Feel round them a sense of freedom nigh,
And a savor keen and sweet of brine and billow,
And a murmur deep and strong of deepening strength.
Though the watchman dream, with sloth or pride for pillow,
And the night be long, not endless is its length.
From the springs of dawn, from clouds that sever,
From the equal heavens and the eastward sea,
The witness comes that endures forever,
Till men be brethren and thralls be free.

III.

But the wind of the wings of dawn expanding
Strikes chill on your hearts as change and death.
Ye are old, but ye have not understanding:
And proud, but your pride is a dead man's breath.
And your wise men, toward whose words and signs ye hearken
And your strong men, in whose hands ye put your trust,
Strain eyes to behold but clouds and dreams that darken,
Stretch hands that can find but weapons red with rust.
Their watchword rings, and the night rejoices,
But the lark's note laughs at the night bird's notes—
'Is virtue verily found in voices?
Or is wisdom won when all win votes?

IV.

'Take heed, ye unwise indeed, who listen
When the wind's wings beat and shift and change;
Whose hearts are uplift, whose eyeballs glisten,
With desire of new things great and strange.
Let not dreams misguide nor any visions wrong you:
That which has been, it is now as it was then.
Is not Compromise of old a god among you?
Is not Precedent indeed a king of men?
But the windy hopes that lead mislead you,
And the sounds ye hear are void and vain.
Is a vote a coat? will franchise feed you,
Or words be a roof against the rain?

V.

'Eight ages are gone since kingship entered,
With knights and peers at its harness-ed back,
And the land, no more in its own strength centred,
Was cast for a prey to the princely pack.
But we pared the fangs and clipped the ravening claws of it,
And good was in time brought forth of an evil thing,
And the land's high name waxed lordlier in war because of it,
When chartered Right had bridled and curbed the king.
And what so fair has the world beholden,

And what so firm has withstood the years,
As Monarchy bound in chains all golden,
And Freedom guarded about with peers?

VI.

'How think ye? know not your lords and masters
What collars are meet for brawling throats?
Is change not mother of strange disasters?
Shall plague or peril be stayed by votes?
Out of precedent and privilege and order
Have we plucked the flower of compromise, whose root
Bears blossoms that shine from border again to border,
And the mouths of many are fed with its temperate fruit.
Your masters are wiser than ye, their henchmen.
Your lords know surely whereof ye have need.
Equality? Fools, would you fain be Frenchmen?
Is equity more than a word indeed?

VII.

'Your voices, forsooth, your most sweet voices,
Your worthy voices, your love, your hate,
Your chioce, who know not whereof your choice is,
What stays are these for a stable state?
Inconstancy blind and deaf with its own fierce babble,
Swells ever your throats with storm of uncertain cheers:
He leans on straws who leans on a light-souled rabble;
His trust is frail who puts not his trust in peers.'
So shrills the message whose word convinces
Of righteousness knaves, of wisdom fools;
That serfs may boast them because of princes,
And the weak rejoice that the strong man rules.

VIII.

True friends, ye people, are these, the faction
Full-mouthed that flatters and snarls and bays,
That fawns and foams with alternate action
And mocks the names that it soils with praise.
As from fraud and force their power had first beginning,
So by righteousness and peace it may not stand,
But by craft of state and nets of secret spinning,
Words that weave and unweave wiles like ropes of sand,
Form, custom, and gold, and laws grown hoary,
And strong tradition that guards the gate:
To these, O people, to these give glory,
That your name among nations may be great.

IX.

How long—for haply not now much longer—
Shall fear put faith in a faithless creed,
And shapes and shadows of truths be stronger
In strong men's eyes than the truth indeed?
If freedom be not a word that dies when spoken,
If justice be not a dream whence men must wake,
How shall not the bonds of the thraldom of old be broken,
And right put might in the hands of them that break?
For clear as a tocsin from the steeple
Is the cry gone forth along the land.
Take heed, ye unwise among the people:
O ye fools, when will ye understand?

A BALLAD AT PARTING.

SEA to sea that clasps and fosters England, uttering evermore
Song eterne and praise immortal of the indomitable shore,
Lifts aloud her constant heart up, south to north and east to west,
Here in speech that shames all music, there in thunder-throated roar,
Chiming concord out of discord, waking rapture out of rest.
All her ways are lovely, all her works and symbols are divine,
Yet shall man love best what first bade leap his heart and bend his knee;

Yet where first his whole soul worshipped
shall his soul set up her shrine:
Nor may love not know the lovelier, fair as
both beheld may be,
Here the limitless north-eastern, there the
strait south-western sea.

Though their chant bear all one burden, as
ere man was born it bore;
Though the burden be diviner than the songs
all souls adore;
Yet may love not choose but choose be-
tween them which to love the best.
Me the sea my nursing-mother, me the Chan-
nel green and hoar,
Holds at heart more fast than all things,
bares for me the goodlier breast
Lifts for me the lordlier love-song, bids for
me more sunlight shine.
Sounds for me the stormier trumpet of the
sweeter strain to me.
So the broad pale Thames is loved not like
the tawny springs of Tyne:
Choice is clear between them for the soul
whose vision holds in fee
Here the limitless north-eastern, there the
strait south-western sea.

Choice is clear, but dear is either; nor has
either not in store
Many a likeness, many a written sign of spirit-
searching lore,
Whence the soul takes fire of sweet remem-
brance, magnified and blest.
Thought of songs whose flame-winged feet
have trod the unfooted water-floor.
When the lord of all the living lords of
souls bade speed their quest;
Soft live sound like children's babble down
the rippling sand's incline,
Or the lovely song that loves them, hailed
with thankful prayer and plea;
These are parcels of the harvest here whose
gathered sheaves are mine,
Garnered now, but sown and reaped where
winds make wild with wrath or glee
Here the limitless north-eastern, there the
strait south-western sea.

Song, thy name is freedom, seeing thy
strength was born of breeze and brine.
Fare now forth and fear no fortune: such a
seal is set on thee.
Joy begat and memory bare thee, seeing in
spirit a twofold sign,
Even the sign of those thy fosters, each as
thou from all time free,
Here the limitless north-eastern, there the
strait south-western sea.

A CENTURY OF ROUNDELS.

DEDICATION.

TO

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI.

Songs light as these may sound, though deep and strong
The heart spake through them, scarce should hope to please
Ears tuned to strains of loftier thoughts than throng
Songs light as these.

Yet grace may set their sometime doubt at ease,
Nor need their too rash reverence fear to wrong
The shrine it serves at and the hope it sees.
For childlike loves and laughters thence prolong
Notes that bid enter, fearless as the breeze,
Even to the shrine of holiest-hearted song,
Songs light as these.

IN HARBOR.

I.

GOODNIGHT and goodbye to the life whose
signs denote us
As mourners clothed with regret for the life
gone by;
To the waters of gloom whence winds of the
dayspring float us
Goodnight and goodbye.

A time is for mourning, a season for grief to sigh;
But were we not fools and blind, by day to devote us
As thralls to the darkness, unseen of the sun-dawn's eye?

We have drunken of Lethe at length, we have eaten of lotus;
What hurts it us here that sorrows are born and die?
We have said to the dream that caressed and the dread that smote us
Goodnight and goodbye.

II.

Outside of the port ye are moored in, lying
Close from the wind and at ease from the tide,
What sounds come swelling, what notes fall dying
Outside?

They will not cease, they will not abide:
Voices of presage in darkness crying
Pass and return and relapse aside.

Ye see not, but hear ye not wild wings flying
To the future that wakes from the past that died?
Is grief still sleeping, is joy not sighing
Outside?

THE WAY OF THE WIND.

THE wind's way in the deep sky's hollow
None may measure, as none can say
How the heart in her shows the swallow
The wind's way.

Hope nor fear can avail to stay
Waves that whiten on wrecks that wallow,
Times and seasons that wane and slay.

Life and love, till the strong night swallow
Thought and hope and the red last ray,
Swim the waters of years that follow
The wind's way.

'HAD I WIST.'

HAD I wist, when life was like a warm wind playing
Light and loud through sundawn and the dew's bright mist,
How the time should come for hearts to sight in saying
'Had I wist'—
Surely not the roses, laughing as they kissed,
Not the lovelier laugh of seas in sunshine swaying,
Should have lured my soul to look thereon and list.

Now the wind is like a soul cast out and praying
Vainly, prayers that pierce not ears when hearts resist:
Now mine own soul sighs, adrift as wind and straying,
'Had I wist.'

RECOLLECTIONS.

I.

YEARS upon years, as a course of clouds that thicken
Thronging the ways of the wind that shifts and veers,
Pass, and the flames of remembered fires re quicken
Years upon years.

Surely the thought in a man's heart hopes or fears
Now that forgetfulness needs must here have stricken
Anguish, and sweetened the sealed-up springs of tears.

Ah, but the strength of regret that strain and sicken,
Yearning for love that the veil of death endears,
Slackens not wing for the wings of years that quicken—
Years upon years.

II.

Years upon years, and the flame of love's high altar
Trembles and sinks, and the sense of listening ears
Heeds not the sound that it heard of love's blithe psalter.
Years upon years.

Only the sense of heart that hearkens hears,
Louder than dreams that assail and doubts that palter,

Sorrow that slept and that wakes ere sundawn peers.

Wakes, that the heart may behold, and yet not falter,
Faces of children as stars unknown of, spheres
Seen but of love, that endures though all things alter,
Years upon years.

III.

Years upon years, as a watch by night that passes,
Pass, and the light of their eyes is fire that sears
Slowly the hopes of the fruit that life amasses
Years upon years.

Pale as the glimmer of stars on moorland meres
Lighten the shadows reverberate from the glasses
Held in their hands as they pass among their peers.

Lights that are shadows, as ghosts on graveyard grasses,
Moving on paths that the moon of memory cheers,
Show but as mists over cloudy mountain passes
Years upon years.

TIME AND LIFE.

I.

TIME, thy name is sorrow, says the stricken
Heart of life, laid waste with wasting flame
Ere the change of things and thoughts requicken,
Time, thy name.

Girt about with shadow, blind and lame,
Ghosts of things that smite and thoughts that sicken
Hunt and hound thee down to death and shame.

Eyes of hours whose paces halt or quicken
Read in bloodred lines of loss and blame,
Writ where cloud and darkness round it thicken,
Time, thy name.

II.

Nay, but rest is born of me for healing,
—So might haply time, with voice represt,
Speak: is grief the last gift of my dealing?
Nay, but rest.

All the world is wearied, east and west,
Tired with toil to watch the slow sun wheeling
Twelve loud hours of life's laborious quest.

Eyes forspent with vigil, faint and reeling,
Find at last my comfort, and are blest,
Not with rapturous light of life's revealing—
Nay, but rest.

A DIALOGUE.

I.

DEATH, if thou wilt, fain would I plead with thee:
Canst thou not spare, of all our hopes have built,
One shelter where our spirits fain would be,
Death, if thou wilt?

No dome with suns and dews impearled and gilt,
Imperial: but some roof of wildwood tree,
Too mean for sceptre's heft or swordblade's hilt.

Some low sweet roof where love might live, set free
From change and fear and dreams of grief or guilt;
Canst thou not leave life even thus much to see,
Death, if thou wilt?

II.

Man, what art thou to speak and plead with me?
What knowest thou of my workings, where and how
What things I fashion? Nay, behold and see,
Man, what art thou?

Thy fruits of life, and blossoms of thy bough,
What are they but my seedlings? Earth and sea
Bear nought but when I breathe on it must bow.

Bow thou too down before me . though thou be
Great, all the pride shall fade from off thy brow,
When Time and strong Oblivion ask of thee,
Man, what art thou?

III.

Death, if thou be or be not, as was said,
Immortal ; if thou make us nought, or we
Survive : thy power is made but of our dread,
Death, if thou be.

Thy might is made out of our fear of thee :
Who fears thee not, hath plucked from off thine head
The crown of cloud that darkens earth and sea.

Earth, sea, and sky, as rain or vapor shed,
Shall vanish ; all the shows of them shall flee :
Then shall we know full surely, quick or dead,
Death, if thou be.

PLUS ULTRA.

Far beyond the sunrise and the sunset rises
Heaven, with worlds on worlds that lighten and respond :
Thought can see not thence the goal of hope's surmises
Far beyond.

Night and day have made an everlasting bond
Each with each to hide in yet more deep disguises
Truth, till souls of men that thirst for truth despond.

All that man in pride of spirit slights or prizes,
All the dreams that make him fearful, fain, or fond,
Fade at forethought's touch of life's unknown surprises
Far beyond.

A DEAD FRIEND.

I.

Gone, O gentle heart and true,
Friend of hopes foregone,
Hopes and hopeful days with you
Gone ?

Days of old that shone
Saw what none shall see anew,
When we gazed thereon.

Soul as clear as sunlit dew,
Why so soon pass on,
Forth from all we loved and knew
Gone ?

II.

Friend of many a season fled,
What may sorrow send
Toward thee now from lips that said
'Friend ?'

Sighs and songs to blend
Praise with pain uncomforted
Though the praise ascend ?

Darkness hides no dearer head :
Why should darkness end
Day so soon, O dear and dead
Friend ?

III.

Dear in death, thou hast thy part
Yet in life, to cheer
Hearts that held thy gentle heart
Dear.

Time and chance may sear
Hope with grief, and death may part
Hand from hand's clasp here :

Memory, blind with tears that start,
Sees through every tear
All that made thee, as thou art,
Dear.

IV.

True and tender, single-souled,
What should memory do
Weeping o'er the trust we hold
True ?

Known and loved of few,
But of these, though small their fold,
Loved how well were you !

Change, that makes of new things old,
Leaves one old thing new ;
Love which promised truth, and told
True.

V.

Kind as heaven, while earth's control
Still had leave to bind

Thee, thy heart was toward man's whole
Kind.

Thee no shadows blind
Now: the change of hours that roll
Leaves thy sleep behind

Love, that hears thy death-bell toll
Yet, may call to mind
Scarce a soul as thy sweet soul
Kind

VI.

How should life, O friend, forget
Death, whose guest art thou?
Faith responds to love's regret,
How?

Still, for us that bow
Sorrowing, still, though life be set,
Shines thy bright mild brow.

Yea, though death and thou be met,
Love may find thee now
Still, albeit we know not yet
How.

VII.

Past as music fades, that shone
While its life might last;
As a song-bird's shadow flown
Past!

Death's reverberate blast
Now for music's lord has blown
Whom thy love held fast.

Dead thy king, and void his throne:
Yet for grief at last
Love makes music of his own
Past.

PAST DAYS.

I.

DEAD and gone, the days we had together,
Shadow-stricken all the lights that shone
Round them, flown as flies the blown-foam's
feather,
Dead and gone.

Where we went, we twain, in time foregone,
Forth by land and sea, and cared not whether,
If I go again, I go alone.
Bound am I with time as with a tether;
Thee perchance death leads enfranchised on.
Far from deathlike life and changeful weather,
Dead and gone.

II.

Above the sea and sea-washed town we dwelt
We twain together, two brief summers, free
From heed of hours as light as clouds that
melt
Above the sea.

Free from all heed of aught at all were we,
Save chance of change that clouds or sunbeams dealt
And gleam of heaven to windward or to lee.

The Norman downs with bright gray waves
for belt
Were more for us than inland ways might be;
A clearer sense of nearer heaven was felt
Above the sea.

III.

Cliffs and downs and headlands which the
forward-hasting
Flight of dawn and eve empurples and embrowns,
Wings of wild sea-winds and stormy seasons
wasting
Cliffs and downs,
These, or ever man was, were: the same sky
frowns,
Laughs, and lightens, as before his soul, forecasting
Times to be, conceived such hopes as time
discrowns.
These we loved of old: but now for me the
blasting
Breath of death makes dull the bright small
seaward towns,
Clothes with human change these all but
everlasting
Cliffs and downs.

AUTUMN AND WINTER.

I.

THREE months bade wane and wax the wintering moon
Between two dates of death, while men were
fain
Yet of the living light that all too soon
Three months bade wane.

Cold autumn, wan with wrath of wind and rain,
Saw pass a soul sweet as the sovereign tune
That death smote silent when he smote again.

First went my friend, in life's mid light of noon,
Who loved the lord of music: then the strain
Whence earth was kindled like as heaven in June
Three months bade wane.

II.

A herald soul before its master's flying
Touched by some few moons first the darkling goal
Where shades rose up to greet the shade, espying
A herald soul;

Shades of dead lords of music, who control
Men living by the might of men undying,
With strength of strains that make delight of dole.

The deep dense dust on death's dim threshold lying
Trembled with sense of kindling sound that stole
Through darkness, and the night gave ear, descrying
A herald soul.

III.

One went before, one after, but so fast
They seem gone hence together, from the shore
Whence we now gaze: yet ere the mightier passed
One went before;

One whose whole heart of love, being set of yore
On that high joy which music lends us, cast
Light round him forth of music's radiant store.

Then went, while earth on winter glared aghast,
The mortal god he worshipped, through the door
Wherethrough so late, his lover to the last,
One went before.

IV.

A star had set an hour before the sun
Sank from the skies wherethrough his heart's pulse yet
Thrills audibly: but few took heed, or none,
A star had set.

All heaven rings back, sonorous with regret,
The deep dirge of the sunset: how should one
Soft star be missed in all the concourse met?

But, O sweet single heart whose work is done,
Whose songs are silent, how should I forget
That ere the sunset's fiery goal was won
A star had set?

THE DEATH OF RICHARD WAGNER.

I.

MOURNING on earth, as when dark hours descend,
Wide-winged with plagues, from heaven; when hope and mirth
Wane, and no lips rebuke or reprehend
Mourning on earth.

The soul wherein her songs of death and birth,
Darkness and light, were wont to sound and blend,
Now silent, leaves the whole world less in worth.

Winds that make moan and triumph, skies that bend,
Thunders, and sound of tides in gulf and firth,
Spake through his spirit of speech, whose death should send
Mourning on earth.

II.

The world's great heart, whence all things strange and rare
Take form and sound, that each inseparate part
May bear its burden in all tuned thoughts that share
The world's great heart—

The fountain forces, whence like steeds that start
Leap forth the powers of earth and fire and air,
Seas that revolve and rivers that depart—

Spake, and were turned to song: yea, all they were,
With all their works, found in his mastering art
Speech as of powers whose uttered word laid bare
The world's great heart.

III.

From the depths of the sea, from the well-springs of earth, from the wastes of the midmost night,
From the fountains of darkness and tempest and thunder, from heights where the soul would be,
The spell of the mage of music evoked their sense, as an unknown light
From the depths of the sea.

As a vision of heaven from the hollows of ocean, that none but a god might see,
Rose out of the silence of things unknown of a presence, a form, a might,
And we heard as a prophet that hears God's message against him, and may not flee.

Eye might not endure it, but ear and heart with a rapture of dark delight,
With a terror and wonder whose care was joy, and a passion of thought set free,
Felt inly the rising of doom divine as a sun-dawn risen to sight
From the depths of the sea

TWO PRELUDES.

I.

LOHENGRIN.

LOVE, out of the depth of things,
As a dewfall felt from above,
From the heaven whence only springs
Love—

Love, heard from the heights thereof,
The clouds and the watersprings,
Draws close as the clouds remove.

And the soul in it speaks and sings,
A swan sweet-souled as a dove,
An echo that only rings
Love.

II.

TRISTAN UND ISOLDE.

Fate out of the deep sea's gloom,
When a man's heart's pride grows great,
And nought seems now to foredoom
Fate,

Fate, laden with fears in wait,
Draws close through the clouds that loom,
Till the soul see, all too late,

More dark than a dead world's tomb,
More high than the sheer dawn's gate,
More deep than the wide sea's womb,
Fate.

THE LUTE AND THE LYRE.

DEEP desire, that pierces heart and spirit to the root,
Finds reluctant voice in verse that yearns like soaring fire,
Takes exultant voice when music holds in high pursuit
Deep desire.

Keen as burns the passion of the rose whose buds respire,
Strong as grows the yearning of the blossom towards the fruit,
Sounds the secret half unspoken ere the deep tones tire.

Slow subsides the rapture that possessed love's flower soft lute,
Slow the palpitation of the triumph of the lyre:
Still the soul feels burn a flame unslaked though these be mute,
Deep desire.

PLUS INTRA.

SOUL within sense, immeasurable obscure,
Insepulchred and deathless, through the dense
Deep elements may scarce be felt as pure
Soul within sense.

From depth and height by measurers left immense,
Thro' sound and shape and color, comes the unsure
Vague utterance, fitful with supreme suspense.

All that may pass, and all that must endure,
Song speaks not, painting shows not : more intense
And keen than these, art wakes with music's lure
Soul within sense.

CHANGE.

BUT now life's face beholden
Seemed bright as heaven's bare brow
With hope of gifts withholden
But now.

From time's full-flowering bough
Each bud spake bloom to embolden
Love's heart, and seal his vow.

Joy's eyes grew deep with olden
Dreams, born he wist not how ;
Thought's meanest garb was golden ;
But now !

A BABY'S DEATH.

I.

A LITTLE SOUL scarce fledged for earth
Takes wing with heaven again for goal
Even while we hailed as fresh from birth
A little soul.

Our thoughts ring sad as bells that toll,
Not knowing beyond this blind world's girth
What things are writ in heaven's full scroll.

Our fruitfulness is there but dearth,
And all things held in time's control
Seem there, perchance, ill dreams, not worth
A little soul.

II.

The little feet that never trod
Earth, never strayed in field or street,
What hand leads upward back to God
The little feet?

A rose in June's most honied heat.
When life makes keen the kindling sod,
Was not so soft and warm and sweet.

Their pilgrimage's period
A few swift moons have seen complete
Since mother's hand first clasped and shod
The little feet.

III.

The little hands that never sought
Earth's prizes, worthless all as sands,
What gift has death, God's servant, brought
The little hands?

We ask : but love's self silent stands,
Love, that lends eyes and wings to thought
To search where death's dim heaven expands

Ere this, perchance, though love know nought
Flowers fill them, grown in lovelier lands.
Where hands of guiding angels caught
The little hands.

IV.

The little eyes that never knew
Light other than of dawning skies,
What new life now lights up anew
The little eyes?

Who knows but on their sleep may rise
Such light as never heaven let through
To lighten earth from Paradise?

No storm, we know, may change the blue
Soft heaven that haply death descries:
No tears, like these in ours, bedew
The little eyes.

V.

Was life so strange, so sad the sky,
So strait the wide world's range,
He would not stay to wonder why
Was life so strange?

Was earth's fair house a joyless grange
Beside that house on high
Whence Time that bore him failed to estrange?

That here at once his soul put by
All gifts of time and change,
And left us heavier hearts to sigh
'Was life so strange?'

VI.

Angel by name love called him, seeing so fair
The sweet small frame!
Meet to be called, if ever man's child were,
Angel by name.

Rose-bright and warm from heaven's own heart he came,
And might not bear
The cloud that covers earth's wan face with shame.

His little light of life was all too rare
And soft a flame:
Heaven yearned for him till angels hailed him there
Angel by name.

VII.

The song that smiled upon his birthday here
Weeps on the grave that holds him undefiled
Whose loss makes bitterer than a soundless tear
The song that smiled.

His name crowned once the mightiest ever styled
Sovereign of arts, and angel: fate and fear
Knew then their master, and were reconciled

But we saw born beneath some tenderer sphere
Michael, an angel and a little child,
Whose loss bows down to weep upon his bier
The song that smiled.

ONE OF TWAIN.

I.

ONE of twain, twin-born with flowers that waken,
Now hath passed from sense of sun and rain:
Wind from off the flower-crowned branch hath shaken
One of twain.

One twin flower must pass, and one remain:
One, the word said soothly, shall be taken,
And another left: can death refrain?

Two years since was love's light song mistaken,
Blessing then both blossoms, half in vain?
Night outspeeding light hath overtaken
One of twain.

Night and light? O thou of heart unwary,
Love, what knowest thou here at all aright,
Lured, abused, misled as men by fairy
Night and light?

Haply, where thine eyes behold but night,
Soft as o'er her babe the smile of Mary
Light breaks flowerwise into new-born sight.

What though night of light to thee be chary?
What though stars of hope like flowers take flight?
Seest thou all things here, where all see vary
Night and light?

DEATH AND BIRTH.

DEATH and birth should dwell not near together:
Wealth keeps house not, even for shame, with dearth:
Fate doth ill to link in one brief tether
Death and birth.

Harsh the yoke that binds them, strange the girth
Seems that girds them each with each: yet whether
Death be best, who knows, or life on earth?

Ill the rose-red and the sable feather
Blend in one crown's plume, as grief with mirth:
Ill met still are warm and wintry weather,
Death and birth.

BIRTH AND DEATH.

BIRTH and death, twin-sister and twin-brother,
Night and day, on all things that draw breath,
Reign, while time keeps friends with one another
Birth and death.

Each brow-bound with flowers diverse of wreath,
Heaven they hail as father, earth as mother,
Faithful found above them and beneath.

Smiles may lighten tears, and tears may smother
Smiles, for all that joy or sorrow saith:
Joy nor sorrow knows not from each other
Birth and death.

BENEDICTION.

BLEST in death and life beyond man's guessing
Little children live and die, possest
Still of grace that keeps them past expressing
Blest.

Each least chirp that rings from every nest,
Each least touch of flower-soft fingers pressing
Aught that yearns and trembles to be prest,

Each least glance, gives gifts of grace, redressing
Grief's worst wrongs : each mother's nurturing breast
Feeds a flower of bliss, beyond all blessing
Blest.

ETUDE RÉALISTE.

I.

A BABY'S feet, like sea-shells pink,
Might tempt, should heaven see meet,
An angel's lips to kiss, we think,
A baby's feet.

Like rose-hued sea-flowers toward the heat
They stretch and spread and wink
Their ten soft buds that part and meet.

No flower-bells that expand and shrink
Gleam half so heavenly sweet
As shine on life's untrodden brink
A baby's feet

II.

A baby's hands, like rosebuds furled,
Whence yet no leaf expands,
Ope if you touch, though close upcurled,
A baby's hands.

Then, even as warriors grip their brands
When battle's bolt is hurled,
They close, clenched hard like tightening bands.

No rosebuds yet by dawn impearled
Match, even in loveliest lands,
The sweetest flowers in all the world–
A baby's hands.

III.

A baby's eyes, ere speech begin
Ere lips learn words or sighs,
Bless all things bright enough to win
A baby's eyes.

Love, while the sweet thing laughs and lies,
And sleep flows out and in,
Lies perfect in them Paradise.

Their glance might cast out pain and sin,
Their speech make dumb the wise,
By mute glad godhead felt within
A baby's eyes.

BABYHOOD.

I.

A BABY shines as bright
If winter or it May be
On eyes that keep in sight
A baby.

Though dark the skies or gray be,
It fills our eyes with light,
If midnight or midday be.

Love hails it, day and night,
The sweetest thing that may be,
Yet cannot praise aright
A baby.

II.

All heaven, in every baby born,
All absolute of earthly leaven,
Reveals itself, tho' man may scorn
All heaven.

Yet man might feel all sin forgiven,
All grief appeased, all pain outworn,
By this one revelation given.

Soul, now forgot thy burdens borne:
Heart, be thy joys now seven times seven:
Love shows in light more bright than morn
All heaven.

III.

What likeness may define, and stay not
From truth's exactest way,
A baby's beauty? Love can say not
What likeness may.

The Mayflower loveliest held in May
Of all that shine and stay not
Laughs not in rosier disarray.

Sleek satin, swansdown, buds that play not
As yet with winds that play,
Would fain be matched with this, and may not:
What likeness may?

IV.

Rose, round whose bed
Dawn's cloudlets close
Earth's brightest-bred
Rose!

No song, love knows,
May praise the head
Your curtain shows.

Ere sleep has fled,
The whole child glows
One sweet live red
Rose

FIRST FOOTSTEPS

A little way, more soft and sweet
Than fields aflower with May,
A babe's feet, venturing, scarce complete
A little way.

Eyes full of dawning day
Look up for mother's eyes to meet,
Too blithe for song to say.

Glad as the golden spring to greet
Its first live leaflet's play,
Love, laughing, leads the little feet
A little way.

A NINTH BIRTHDAY.

February 4, 1883.

I.

Three times thrice hath winter's rough white wing
Crossed and curdled wells and streams with ice
Since his birth whose praises love would sing
Three times thrice.

Earth nor sea bears flower nor pearl of price
Fit to crown the forehead of my king.
Honey meet to please him, balm, nor spice.

Love can think of nought but love to bring
Fit to serve or do him sacrifice
Ere his eyes have looked upon the spring
Three times thrice.

II.

Three times thrice the world has fallen on slumber,
Shone and waned and withered in a trice,
Frost has fettered Thames and Tyne and Humber
Three times thrice,

Fogs have swoln too thick for steel to slice,
Cloud and mud have soiled with grime and umber
Earth and heaven, defaced as souls with vice

Winds have risen to wreck, snows fallen to cumber.
Ships and chariots, trapped like rats or mice,
Since my king first smiled, whose years now number
Three times thrice.

III.

Three times thrice, in wine of song full-flowing,
Pledge, my heart, the child whose eyes suffice,
Once beheld, to set thy joy-bells going
Three times thrice.

Not the lands of palm and date and rice
Glow more bright when summer leaves them glowing,
Laugh more light when suns and winds entice.

Noon and eve and midnight and cock-crowing,
Child whose love makes life as paradise,
Love should sound your praise with clarions blowing
Three times thrice.

NOT A CHILD.

I.

'Not a child: I call myself a boy,'
Says my king, with accent stern yet mild,
Now nine years have brought him change of joy;
'Not a child.'

How could reason be so far beguiled,
Err so far from sense's safe employ,
Stray so wide of truth, or run so wild?

Seeing his face bent over book or toy,
Child I called him, smiling: but he smiled
Back, as one too high for vain annoy—
Not a child.

II.

Not a child? alack the year!
What should ail an undefiled
Heart, that he would fain appear
Not a child?

Men, with years and memories piled
Each on other, far and near,
Fain again would so be styled:

Fain would cast off hope and fear,
Rest, forget, be reconciled:
Why would you so fain be, dear,
Not a child?

III.

Child or boy, my darling, which you will,
Still your praise finds heart and song employ,
Heart and song both yearning toward you still,
Child or boy.

All joys else might sooner pall or cloy
Love than this which inly takes its fill,
Dear, of sight of your more perfect joy.

Nay, be aught you please, let all fulfil
All your pleasure; be your world your toy:
Mild or wild we love you, loud or still,
Child or boy.

TO DORA DORIAN.

CHILD of two strong nations, heir
Born of high-souled hope that smiled
Seeing for each brought forth a fair
Child,

By thy gracious brows, and wild
Golden-clouded heaven of hair,
By thine eyes elate and mild,

Hope would fain take heart to swear
Men should yet be reconciled,
Seeing the sign she bids thee bear,
Child.

THE ROUNDEL.

A ROUNDEL is wrought as a ring or a star-
bright sphere,
With craft of delight and with cunning of
sound unsought,
That the heart of the hearer may smile if to
pleasure his ear
A roundel is wrought.

Its jewel of music is carven of all or of
aught—
Love, laughter or mourning—remembrance of
rapture or fear—
That fancy may fashion to hang in the ear of
thought.

As a bird's quick song runs round, and the
hearts in us hear
Pause answer to pause, and again the same
strain caught,
So moves the device whence, round as a pearl
or tear,
A roundel is wrought.

AT SEA.

'FAREWELL and adieu' was the burden pre-
vailing
Long since in the chant of a home-faring
crew;
And the heart in us echoes, with laughing or
wailing,
Farewell and adieu.

Each year that we live shall we sing it anew,
With a water untravelled before us for sailing
And a water behind us that wrecks may be-
strew.

The stars of the past and the beacons are
paling,
The heavens and the waters are hoarier of hue;
But the heart in us chants not an all unavail-
ing
Farewell and adieu.

WASTED LOVE.

WHAT shall be done for sorrow
With love whose race is run?
Where help is none to borrow,
What shall be done?

In vain his hands have spun
The web, or drawn the furrow:
No rest their toil hath won.

His task is all gone thorough,
And fruit thereof is none:
And who dare say to-morrow
What shall be done?

BEFORE SUNSET.

LOVE'S twilight wanes in heaven above,
On earth ere twilight reigns:
Ere fear may feel the chill thereof,
Love's twilight wanes.

Ere yet the insatiate heart complains
'Too much, and scarce enough,'
The lip so late athirst refrains.

Soft on the neck of either dove
Love's hands let slip the reins:
And while we look for light of love
Love's twilight wanes.

A SINGING LESSON.

FAR-FETCHED and dear-bought, as the proverb rehearses,
Is good, or was held so, for ladies: but nought
In a song can be good if the turn of the verse is
Far-fetched and dear-bought.

As the turn of a wave should it sound, and the thought
Ring smooth, and as light as the spray that disperses
Be the gleam of the words for the garb thereof wrought.

Let the soul in it shine through the sound as it pierces
Men's hearts with possession of music unsought.
For the bounties of song are no jealous god's mercies,
Far-fetched and dear-bought.

FLOWER-PIECES.

I.

LOVE LIES BLEEDING.

LOVE lies bleeding in the bed whereover
Roses lean with smiling mouths or pleading:
Earth lies laughing where the sun's dart clove her:
Love lies bleeding.

Stately shine his purple plumes, exceeding
Pride of princess: nor shall maid or lover
Find on earth a fairer sign worth heeding.

Yet may love, sore wounded, scarce recover
Strength and spirit again, with life receding:
Hope and joy, wind-winged, about him hover:
Love lies bleeding.

II.

LOVE IN A MIST.

Light love in a mist, by the midsummer moon misguided,
Scarce seen in the twilight garden if gloom insist,
Seems vainly to seek for a star whose gleam has derided
Light love in a mist.

All day in the sun, when the breezes do all they list,
His soft blue raiment of cloudlike blossom abided
Unrent and unwithered of winds and of rays that kissed.

Blithe-hearted or sad, as the cloud or the sun subsided,
Love smiled in the flower with a meaning whereof none wist
Save two that beheld, as a gleam that before them glided,
Light love in a mist.

THREE FACES.

I.

VENTIMIGLIA.

THE sky and sea glared hard and bright and blank:
Down the one steep street, with slow steps firm and free

A tall girl paced, with eyes too proud to thank
The sky and sea.

One dead flat sapphire, void of wrath or glee,
Through bay on bay shone blind from bank to bank
The weary Mediterranean, drear to see.

More deep, more living, shone her eyes that drank
The breathless light and shed again on me,
Till pale before their splendor waned and shrank
The sky and sea.

II.

GENOA.

Again the same strange might of eyes, that saw
In heaven and earth nought fairer, overcame
My sight with rapture of reiterate awe,
Again the same.

The self-same pulse of wonder shook like flame
The spirit of sense within me: what strange law
Had bid this be, for blessing or for blame?

To what veiled end that fate or chance foresaw
Came forth this second sister face, that came
Absolute, perfect, fair, without a flaw,
Again the same?

III.

VENICE.

Out of the dark pure twilight, where the stream
Flows glimmering, streaked by many a birdlike bark
That skims the gloom whence towers and bridges gleam
Out of the dark,

Once more a face no glance might choose but mark
Shone pale and bright, with eyes whose deep slow beam
Made quick the twilight, lifeless else and stark.

The same it seemed, or mystery made it seem,
As those before beholden; but St. Mark
Ruled here the ways that showed it like a dream
Out of the dark.

EROS.

I.

Eros, from rest in isles far-famed,
With rising Anthesterion rose,
And all Hellenic heights acclaimed
Eros.

The sea one pearl, the shore one rose,
All round him all the flower-month flamed
And lightened, laughing off repose.

Earth's heart, sublime and unashamed,
Knew, even perchance as man's heart knows,
The thirst of all men's nature named
Eros.

II.

Eros, a fire of heart untamed,
A light of spirit in sense that glows,
Flamed heavenward still ere earth defamed
Eros.

Nor fear nor shame durst curb or close
His golden godhead, marred and maimed,
Fast round with bends that burnt and froze.

Ere evil faith struck blind and lamed
Love, pure as fire or flowers or snows,
Earth hailed as blameless and unblamed
Eros.

III.

Eros, with shafts by thousands aimed
At laughing lovers round in rows,
Fades from their sight whose tongues proclaimed
Eros.

But higher than transient shapes or shows
The light of love in life inflamed
Spring toward no goal that these disclose.

Above those heavens which passion claimed
Shines, veiled by change that ebbs and flows,
The soul in all things born or framed.
Eros.

SORROW.

SORROW, on wing through the world forever,
Here and there for awhile would borrow
Rest, if rest might haply deliver
Sorrow.

One thought lies close in her heart gnawn through
With pain, a weed in a dried up-river,
A rust-red share in an empty furrow.

Hearts that strain at her chain would sever
The link where yesterday frets to-morrow!
All things pass in the world, but never
Sorrow.

SLEEP.

SLEEP, when a soul that her own clouds cover
Wails that sorrow should always keep
Watch, nor see in the gloom above her
Sleep.

Down, through darkness naked and steep,
Sinks, and the wings of his comforts cover
Close the soul, though her wouud be deep.

God beloved of us, all men's lover,
All most weary that smile or weep
Feel thee afar or anear them hover,
Sleep.

ON AN OLD ROUNDEL.

Translated by D. G. Rossetti from the French of Villon.

I.

DEATH, from thy rigor a voice appealed,
And men still hear what the sweet cry saith,
Crying aloud in thine ears fast sealed,
Death.

As a voice in a vision that vanisheth,
Through the grave's gate barred and the portal steeled
The sound of the wail of it travelleth.

Wailing aloud from a heart unhealed,
It woke response of melodious breath
From lips now too by thy kiss congealed,
Death.

II.

Ages ago, from the lips of a sad glad poet
Whose soul was a wild dove lost in the whirling snow,
The soft keen plaint of his pain took voice to show it
Ages ago.

So clear, so deep, the divine drear accents flow,
No soul that listens may choose but thrill to know it,
Pierced and wrung by the passionate music's throe.

For us there murmurs a nearer voice below it,
Known once of ears that never again shall know
Nor mute as the mouth which felt death's wave o'erflow it
Ages ago.

A LANDSCAPE BY COURBET.

Low lies the mere beneath the moorside, still
And glad of silence: down the wood sweeps clear
To the soft verge where fed with many a rill
Low lies the mere.

The wind speaks only summer: eye nor ear
Sees aught at all of dark, hears aught of shrill,
From sound or shadow felt or fancied here.

Strange, as we praise the dead man's might and skill,
Strange that harsh thoughts should make such heavy cheer,
While, clothed with peace by heaven's most gentle will,
Low lies the mere.

A FLOWER-PIECE BY FANTIN.

HEART'S EASE or pansy, pleasure or thought,
Which would the picture give us of these?
Surely the heart that conceived it sought
Heart's ease.

Surely by glad and divine degrees
The heart impelling the hand that wrought
Wrought comfort here for a soul's disease.

Deep flowers, with lustre and darkness fraught,
From glass that gleams as the chill still seas
Lean and lend for a heart distraught
Heart's ease.

A NIGHT-PIECE BY MILLET.

WIND and sea and cloud and cloud-forsaking
Mirth of moonlight where the storm leaves free
Heaven awhile, for all the wrath of waking
Wind and sea.

Bright with glad mad rapture, fierce with glee,
Laughs the moon, born on past cloud's o'ertaking
Fast, it seems, as wind or sail can flee.

One blown sail beneath her, hardly making
Forth, wild-winged for harborage yet to be
Strives and leaps and pants beneath the breaking
Wind and sea.

'MARZO PAZZO.'

MAD March, with the wind in his wings widespread,
Leaps from heaven, and the deep dawn's arch
Hails re-risen again from the dead
Mad March.

Soft small flames on rowan and larch
Break forth as laughter on lips that said
Naught till the pulse in them beat love's march.

But the heartbeat now in the lips rose-red
Speaks life to the world, and the winds that parch
Bring April forth as a bride to wed
Mad March.

DEAD LOVE.

DEAD love, by treason slain, lies stark,
White as a dead stark-stricken dove :
None that pass by him pause to mark
Dead love.

His heart, that strained and yearned and strove
As toward the sundawn strives the lark,
Is cold as all the old joy thereof.

Dead men, re-risen from dust, may hark
When rings the trumpet blown above :
It will not raise from out the dark
Dead love.

DISCORD.

UNRECONCILED by life's fleet years, that fled
With changeful clang of pinions wide and wild,
Though two great spirits had lived, and hence had sped
Unreconciled ;

Though time and change, harsh time's imperious child,
That wed strange hands together, might not wed
High hearts by hope's misprision once beguiled;

Faith, by the ligh from either's memory shed,
Sees, radiant as their ends were undefiled,
One goal for each—not twain among the dead
Unreconciled.

CONCORD.

RECONCILED by death's mild hand, that giving
Peace gives wisdom, not more strong than mild,
Love beholds them, each without misgiving
Reconciled.

Each on earth alike of earth reviled,
Hated, feared, derided, and forgiving,
Each alike had heaven at heart, and smiled.

Both bright names, clothed round with man's thanksgiving ;
Shine, twin stars above the storm-drifts piled,
Dead and deathless, whom we saw not living
Reconciled.

MOURNING.

ALAS my brother ! the cry of the mourners of old
That cried on each other

All crying aloud on the dead as the death-note rolled,
Alas my brother!

As flashes of dawn that mists from an east wind smother
With fold upon fold,
The past years gleam that linked us one with another.

Time sunders hearts as of brethren whose eyes behold
No more their mother:
But a cry sounds yet from the shrine whose fires wax cold,
Alas my brother!

APEROTOS EROS.

STRONG as death, and cruel as the grave,
Clothed with cloud and tempest's blackening breath,
Known of death's dread self, whom none outbrave,
Strong as death,

Love, brow-bound with anguish for a wreath,
Fierce with pain, a tyrant-hearted slave,
Burns above a world that groans beneath.

Hath not pity power on thee to save,
Love? hath power no pity? Nought he saith,
Answering: blind he walks as wind or wave,
Strong as death.

TO CATULLUS.

MY brother, my Valerius, dearest head
Of all whose crowning bay-leaves crown their mother,
Rome, in the notes first heard of thine I read
My brother.

No dust that death or time can strew may smother
Love and the sense of kinship inly bred
From loves and hates at one with one another.

To thee was Cæsar's self nor dear nor dread,
Song and the sea were sweeter each than other:
How should I living fear to call thee dead
My brother?

'INSULARUM OCELLE.'

SARK, fairer than aught in the world than the lit skies cover,
Laughs inly behind her cliffs, and the sea-farers mark
As a shrine where the sunlight serves, though the blown clouds hover,
Sark.

We mourn, for love of a song that outsang the lark,
That nought so lovely beholden of Sirmio's lover
Made glad in Propontis the flight of his Pontic bark.

Here earth lies lordly, triumphal as heaven is above her,
And splendid and strange as the sea that upbears as an ark,
As a sign for the rapture of storm-spent eyes to discover,
Sark.

IN SARK.

ABREAST and ahead of the sea is a crag's front cloven asunder
With strong sea-breach and with wasting of winds whence terror is shed
As a shadow of death from the wings of the darkness on waters that thunder
Abreast and ahead.

At its edge is a sepulchre hollowed and hewn for a lone man's bed,
Propped open with rock and agape on the sky and the sea thereunder,
But roofed and walled in well from the wrath of them slept its dead.

Here might not a man drink rapture of rest, or delight above wonder,
Beholding, a soul disembodied, the days and the nights that fled,
With splendor and sound of the tempest around and above him and under,
Abreast and ahead?

IN GUERNSEY.

I.

THE heavenly bay, ringed round with cliffs and moors,
Storm-stained ravines, and crags that lawns inlay,

Soothes as with love the rocks whose guard secures
The heavenly bay.

O friend, shall time take ever this away,
This blessing given of beauty that endures,
This glory shown us, not to pass but stay?

Though sight be changed for memory, love ensures
What memory, changed by love to sight, would say—
The word that seals forever mine and yours
The heavenly bay.

II.

My mother sea, my fostress, what new strand,
What new delight of waters, may this be,
The fairest found since time's first breezes fanned
My mother sea?

Once more I give me body and soul to thee,
Who hast my soul forever: cliff and sand
Recede, and heart to heart once more are we.

My heart springs first and plunges, ere my hand
Strike out from shore: more close it brings to me,
More near and dear than seems my fatherland,
My mother sea.

III.

Across and along, as the bay's breadth opens, and o'er us
Wild autumn exults in the wind, swift rapture and strong
Impels us, and broader the wide waves brighten before us
Across and along.

The whole world's heart is uplifted, and knows not wrong;
The whole world's life is a chant to the sea-tide's chorus;
Are we not as waves of the water, as notes of the song?

Like children unworn of the passions and toils that wore us,
We breast for a season the breadth of the seas that throng,
Rejoicing as they, to be borne as of old they bore us
Across and along.

IV.

On Dante's track by some funereal spell
Drawn down through desperate ways that lead not back
We seem to move, bound forth past flood and fell
On Dante's track.

The gray path ends: the gaunt rocks gape: the black
Deep hollow tortuous night, a soundless shell,
Glares darkness: are the fires of old grown slack?

Nay, then, what flames are these that leap and swell
As 'twere to show, where earth's foundations crack,
The secrets of the sepulchres of hell
On Dante's track?

V.

By mere men's hands the flame was lit, we know,
From heaps of dry waste whin and casual brands:
Yet, knowing, we scarce believe it kindled so
By mere men's hands.

Above, around, high-vaulted hell expands,
Steep, dense, a labyrinth walled and roofed with woe
Whose mysteries even itself not understands.

The scorn in Farinata's eyes aglow
Seems visible in this flame: there Geryon stands:
No stage of earth's is here, set forth to show
By mere men's hands.

VI.

Night, in utmost noon forlorn and strong, with heart athirst and fasting,
Hungers here, barred up forever, whence as one whom dreams affright
Day recoils before the low-browed lintel threatening doom and casting
Night.

All the reefs and islands, all the lawns and highlands, clothed with light,
Laugh for love's sake in their sleep outside: but here the night speaks, blasting
Day with silent speech and scorn of all things known from depth to height

Lower than dive the thoughts of spirit-stricken fear in souls forecasting
Hell, the deep void seems to yawn fear's reach, and higher than sight
Rise the walls and roofs that compass it about with everlasting
Night.

VII.

The house accurst, with cursing sealed and signed,
Heeds not what storms about it burn and burst:
Not fear more fearful than its own may find
The house accurst.

Barren as crime, anhungered and athirst,
Blank miles of moor sweep inland, sere and blind,
Where summer's best rebukes not winter's worst.

The low bleak tower with nought save wastes behind
Stares down the abyss whereon chance reared and nursed
This type and likeness of the accurst man's mind,
The house accurst.

VIII.

Beloved and blest, lit warm with love and fame,
The house that had the light of the earth for guest
Hears for his name's sake all men hail its name
Beloved and blest.

This eyrie was the homeless eagle's nest
When storm laid waste his eyrie: hence he came
Again when storm smote sore his mother's breast.

Bow down men bade us, or be clothed with blame
And mocked for madness: worst, they sware, was best
But grief shone here, while joy was one with shame,
Beloved and blest.

C.

ENVOI.

FLY, white butterflies, out to sea,
Frail pale wings for the winds to try,
Small white wings that we scarce can see,
Fly.

Here and there may a chance-caught eye
Note in a score of you twain or three
Brighter or darker of mould or dye.

Some fly light as a laugh of glee,
Some fly soft as a low long sigh:
All to the haven where each would be,
Fly.

ASTROPHEL.

AFTER READING SIR PHILIP SIDNEY'S ARCADIA IN THE GARDEN OF AN OLD ENGLISH MANOR HOUSE.

I.

A STAR in the silence that follows
The song of the death of the sun
Speaks music in heaven, and the hollows
And heights of the world are as one;
One lyre that outsings and outlightens
The rapture of sunset, and thrills
Mute night till the sense of it brightens
The soul that it fills.

The flowers of the sun that is sunken
Hang heavy of heart as of head;
The bees that have eaten and drunken
The soul of their sweetness are fled;
But a sunflower of song, on whose honey
My spirit has fed as a bee,
Makes sunnier than morning was sunny
The twilight for me.

The letters and lines on the pages
That sundered mine eyes and the flowers
Wax faint as the shadows of ages
That sunder their season and ours;
As the ghosts of the centuries that sever
A season of colourless time
From the days whose remembrance is ever,
As they were, sublime.

The season that bred and that cherished
The soul that I commune with yet,
Had it utterly withered and perished
To rise not again as it set,
Shame were it that Englishmen living
Should read as their forefathers read
The books of the praise and thanksgiving
Of Englishmen dead.

O light of the land that adored thee
And kindled thy soul with her breath,
Whose life, such as fate would afford thee,
Was lovelier than aught but thy death,
By what name, could thy lovers but know it,
Might love of thee hail thee afar,
Philisides, Astrophel, poet
Whose love was thy star?

A star in the moondawn of Maytime,
A star in the cloudland of change;
Too splendid and sad for the daytime
To cheer or eclipse or estrange;
Too sweet for tradition or vision
To see but through shadows of tears
Rise deathless across the division
Of measureless years.

The twilight may deepen and harden
As nightward the stream of it runs
Till starshine transfigure a garden
Whose radiance responds to the sun's:
The light of the love of thee darkens
The lights that arise and that set:
The love that forgets thee not hearkens
If England forget.

II.

Bright and brief in the sight of grief and love
the light of thy lifetime shone,
Seen and felt by the gifts it dealt, the grace it
gave, and again was gone:
Ay, but now it is death, not thou, whom time
has conquered as years pass on.

Ay, not yet may the land forget that bore and
loved thee and praised and wept,
Sidney, lord of the stainless sword, the name
of names that her heart's love kept
Fast as thine did her own, a sign to light thy
life till it sank and slept.

Bright as then for the souls of men thy brave
Arcadia resounds and shines,
Lit with love that beholds above all joys and
sorrows the steadfast signs,
Faith, a splendour that hope makes tender,
and truth, whose presage the soul divines.

All the glory that girds the story of all thy life
as with sunlight round,
All the spell that on all souls fell who saw
thy spirit, and held them bound,
Lives for all that have heard the call and
cadence yet of its music sound.

Music bright as the soul of light, for wings an
eagle, for notes a dove,
Leaps and shines from the lustrous lines
wherethrough thy soul from afar above
Shone and sang till the darkness rang with
light whose fire is the fount of love.

Love that led thee alive, and fed thy soul with
sorrows and joys and fears,
Love that sped thee, alive and dead, to fame's
fair goal with thy peerless peers,
Feeds the flame of thy quenchless name with
light that lightens the rayless years.

Dark as sorrow though night and morrow
may lower with presage of clouded
fame,
How may she that of old bare thee, may Sidney's England, be brought to shame?
How should this be, while England is? What
need of answer beyond thy name?

III.

From the love that transfigures thy glory,
From the light of the dawn of thy death,
The life of thy song and thy story
Took subtler and fierier breath.
And we, though the day and the morrow
Set fear and thanksgiving at strife,
Hail yet in the star of thy sorrow
The sun of thy life.

Shame and fear may beset men here, and bid
thanksgiving and pride be dumb:
Faith, discrowned of her praise, and wound
about with toils till her life wax
numb,
Scarce may see if the sundawn be, if darkness
die not and dayrise come.

But England, enmeshed and benetted
With spiritless villainies round,
With counsels of cowardice fretted,
With trammels of treason enwound,
Is yet, though the season be other
Than wept and rejoiced over thee,
Thine England, thy lover, thy mother,
Sublime as the sea.

Hers wast thou: if her face be now less bright,
or seem for an hour less brave,
Let but thine on her darkness shine, thy
saviour spirit revive and save,
Time shall see, as the shadows flee, her shame
entombed in a shameful grave.

If death and not life were the portal
That opens on life at the last,
If the spirit of Sidney were mortal
And the past of it utterly past,
Fear stronger than honour was ever,
Forgetfulness mightier than fame,
Faith knows not if England should never
Subside into shame.

Yea, but yet is thy sun not set, thy sunbright
spirit of trust withdrawn:
England's love of thee burns above all hopes
that darken or fears that fawn:
Hers thou art: and the faithful heart that
hopes begets upon darkness dawn.

The sunset that sunrise will follow
Is less than the dream of a dream:
The starshine on height and on hollow
Sheds promise that dawn shall redeem:
The night, if the daytime would hide it,
Shows lovelier, aflame and afar,
Thy soul and thy Stella's beside it,
A star by a star.

A NYMPHOLEPT.

Summer, and noon, and a splendour of silence,
felt,
Seen, and heard of the spirit within the
sense.
Soft through the frondage the shades of the
sunbeams melt,
Sharp through the foliage the shafts of
them, keen and dense,
Cleave, as discharged from the string of
the God's bow, tense
As a war-steed's girth, and bright as a war-
rior's belt.
Ah, why should an hour that is heaven
for an hour pass hence?

I dare not sleep for delight of the perfect hour,
Lest God be wroth that his gift should be
scorned of man.
The face of the warm bright world is the face
of a flower,
The word of the wind and the leaves that
the light winds fan
As the word that quickened at first into
flame, and ran,
Creative and subtle and fierce with invasive
power,
Through darkness and cloud, from the
breath of the one God, Pan.

The perfume of earth possessed by the sun
pervades
The chaster air that he soothes but with
sense of sleep.
Soft, imminent, strong as desire that prevails
and fades,
The passing noon that beholds not a
cloudlet weep
Imbues and impregnates life with delight
more deep
Than dawn or sunset or moonrise on lawns
or glades
Can shed from the skies that receive it and
may not keep.

The skies may hold not the splendour of sun-
down fast;
It wanes into twilight as dawn dies down
into day.

And the moon, triumphant when twilight is overpast,
Takes pride but awhile in the hours of her stately sway.
But the might of the noon, though the light of it pass away,
Leaves earth fulfilled of desires and of dreams that last;
But if any there be that hath sense of them none can say

For if any there be that hath sight of them, sense, or trust
Made strong by the might of a vision, the strength of a dream,
His lips shall straiten and close as a dead man's must,
His heart shall be sealed as the voice of a frost-bound stream.
For the deep mid mystery of light and of heat that seem
To clasp and pierce dark earth, and enkindle dust,
Shall a man's faith say what it is? or a man's guess deem?

Sleep lies not heavier on eyes that have watched all night
Than hangs the heat of the noon on the hills and trees.
Why now should the haze not open, and yield to sight
A fairer secret than hope or than slumber sees?
I seek not heaven with submission of lips and knees,
With worship and prayer for a sign till it leap to light:
I gaze on the gods about me, and call on these.

I call on the gods hard by, the divine dim powers
Whose likeness is here at hand, in the breathless air,
In the pulseless peace of the fervid and silent flowers,
In the faint sweet speech of the waters that whisper there.
Ah, what should darkness do in a world so fair?
The bent-grass heaves not, the couch-grass quails not or cowers;
The wind's kiss frets not the rowan's or aspen's hair.

But the silence trembles with passion of sound suppressed,
And the twilight quivers and yearns to the sunward, wrung
With love as with pain; and the wide wood's motionless breast
Is thrilled with a dumb desire that would fain find tongue
And palpitates, tongueless as she whom a man-snake stung,
Whose heart now heaves in the nightingale, never at rest
Nor satiated ever with song till her last be sung.

Is it rapture or terror that circles me round, and invades
Each vein of my life with hope—if it be not fear?
Each pulse that awakens my blood into rapture fades,
Each pulse that subsides into dread of a strange thing near
Requickens with sense of a terror less dread than dear.
Is peace not one with light in the deep green glades
Where summer at noonday slumbers? Is peace not here?

The tall thin stems of the firs, and the roof sublime
That screens from the sun the floor of the steep still wood,
Deep, silent, splendid, and perfect and calm as time,
Stand fast as ever in sight of the night they stood,
When night gave all that moonlight and dewfall could.
The dense ferns deepen, the moss glows warm as the thyme:
The wild heath quivers about me: the world is good.

Is it Pan's breath, fierce in the tremulous maidenhair,
That bids fear creep as a snake through the woodlands, felt
In the leaves that it stirs not yet, in the mute bright air,
In the stress of the uns? For here has the great God dwelt:

For hence were the shafts of his love or his anger dealt.
For here has his wrath been fierce as his love was fair,
When each was as fire to the darkness its breath bade melt.

Is it love, is it dread, that enkindles the trembling noon,
That yearns, reluctant in rapture that fear has fed,
As man for woman, as woman for man? Full soon,
If I live, and the life that may look on him drop not dead,
Shall the ear that hears not a leaf quake hear his tread,
The sense that knows not the sound of the deep day's tune
Receive the God, be it love that he brings or dread.

The naked noon is upon me: the fierce dumb spell,
The fearful charm of the strong sun's imminent might,
Unmerciful, steadfast, deeper than seas that swell,
Pervades, invades, appals me with loveless light,
With harsher awe than breathes in the breath of night.
Have mercy, God who art all! For I know thee well,
How sharp is thine eye to lighten, thine hand to smite.

The whole wood feels thee, the whole air fears thee: but fear
So deep, so dim, so sacred, is wellnigh sweet.
For the light that hangs and broods on the woodlands here,
Intense, invasive, intolerant, imperious, and meet
To lighten the works of thine hands and the ways of thy feet,
Is hot with the fire of the breath of thy life, and dear
As hope that shrivels or shrinks not for frost or heat.

Thee, thee the supreme dim godhead, approved afar,
Perceived of the soul and conceived of the sense of man,
We scarce dare love, and we dare not fear: the star
We call the sun, that lit us when life began
To brood on the world that is thine by his grace for a span,
Conceals and reveals in the semblance of things that are
Thine imminent presence, the pulse of thy heart's life, Pan.

The fierce mid noon that awakens and warms the snake
Conceals thy mercy, reveals thy wrath: and again
The dew-bright hour that assuages the twilight brake
Conceals thy wrath and reveals thy mercy: then
Thou art fearful only for evil souls of men
That feel with nightfall the serpent within them wake,
And hate the holy darkness on glade and glen.

Yea, then we know not and dream not if ill things be,
Or if aught of the work of the wrong of the world be thine.
We hear not the footfall of terror that treads the sea,
We hear not the moan of winds that assail the pine:
We see not if shipwreck reign in the storm's dim shrine;
If death do service and doom bear witness to thee
We see not,—know not if blood for thy lips be wine.

But in all things evil and fearful that fear may scan,
As in all things good, as in all things fair that fall,
We know thee present and latent, the lord of man;
In the murmuring of doves, in the clamouring of winds that call
And wolves that howl for their prey; in the midnight's pall,

In the naked and nymph-like feet of the dawn, O Pan,
And in each life living, O thou the God who art all.

Smiling and singing, wailing and wringing of hands,
Laughing and weeping, watching and sleeping, still
Proclaim but and prove but thee, as the shifted sands
Speak forth and show but the strength of the sea's wild will
That sifts and grinds them as grain in the storm-wind's mill.
In thee is the doom that falls and the doom that stands:
The tempests utter thy word, and the stars fulfil.

Where Etna shudders with passion and pain volcanic
That rend her heart as with anguish that rends a man's,
Where Typho labours, and finds not his thews Titanic,
In breathless torment that ever the flame's breath fans,
Men felt and feared thee of old, whose pastoral clans
Were given to the charge of thy keeping; and soundless panic
Held fast the woodland whose depths and whose heights were Pan's.

And here, though fear be less than delight, and awe
Be one with desire and with worship of earth and thee,
So mild seems now thy secret and speechless law,
So fair and fearless and faithful and godlike she,
So soft the spell of thy whisper on stream and sea,
Yet man should fear lest he see what of old men saw
And withered: yet shall I quail if thy breath smite me.

Lord God of life and of light and of all things fair,
Lord God of ravin and ruin and all things dim,
Death seals up life, and darkens the sunbright air,
And the stars that watch blind earth in the deep night swim
Laugh, saying, 'What God is your God, that ye call on him?
What is man, that the God who is guide of our way should care
If day for a man be golden, or night be grim?'

But thou, dost thou hear? Stars too but abide for a span,
Gods too but endure for a season; but thou, if thou be
God, more than shadows conceived and adored of man,
Kind Gods and fierce, that bound him or made him free,
The skies that scorn us are less in thy sight than we,
Whose souls have strength to conceive and perceive thee, Pan,
With sense more subtle than senses that hear and see.

Yet may not it say, though it seek thee and think to find
One soul of sense in the fire and the frost-bound clod,
What heart is this, what spirit alive or blind,
That moves thee: only we know that the ways we trod
We tread, with hands unguided, with feet unshod,
With eyes unlightened; and yet, if with steadfast mind,
Perchance may we find thee and know thee at last for God.

Yet then should God be dark as the dawn is bright,
And bright as the night is dark on the world—no more.
Light slays not darkness, and darkness absorbs not light;
And the labour of evil and good from the years of yore
Is even as the labour of waves on a sunless shore.
And he who is first and last, who is depth and height,
Keeps silence now, as the sun when the woods wax hoar.

The dark dumb godhead innate in the fair world's life
Imbues the rapture of dawn and of noon with dread,
Infects the peace of the star-shod night with strife,
Informs with terror the sorrow that guards the dead.
No service of bended knee or of humbled head
May soothe or subdue the God who has change to wife:
And life with death is as morning with evening wed.

And yet, if the light and the life in the light that here
Seem soft and splendid and fervid as sleep may seem
Be more than the shine of a smile or the flash of a tear,
Sleep, change, and death are less than a spell-struck dream,
And fear than the fall of a leaf on a starlit stream.
And yet, if the hope that hath said it absorb not fear,
What helps it man that the stars and the waters gleam?

What helps it man, that the noon be indeed intense,
The night be indeed worth worship? Fear and pain
Were lords and masters yet of the secret sense,
Which now dares deem not that light is as darkness, fain
Though dark dreams be to declare it, crying in vain.
For whence, thou God of the light and the darkness, whence
Dawns now this vision that bids not the sunbeams wane?

What light, what shadow, diviner than dawn or night,
Draws near, makes pause, and again—or I dream—draws near?
More soft than shadow, more strong than the strong sun's light,
More pure than moonbeams—yea, but the rays run sheer
As fire from the sun through the dusk of the pinewood, clear
And constant; yea, but the shadow itself is bright
That the light clothes round with love that is one with fear.

Above and behind it the noon and the woodland lie,
Terrible, radiant with mystery, superb and subdued,
Triumphant in silence; and hardly the sacred sky
Seems free from the tyrannous weight of the dumb fierce mood
Which rules as with fire and invasion of beams that brood
The breathless rapture of earth till its hour pass by
And leave her spirit released and her peace renewed.

I sleep not: never in sleep has a man beholden
This. From the shadow that trembles and yearns with light
Suppressed and elate and reluctant—obscure and golden
As water kindled with presage of dawn or night—
A form, a face, a wonder to sense and sight,
Grows great as the moon through the month; and her eyes embolden
Fear, till it change to desire, and desire to delight.

I sleep not: sleep would die of a dream so strange;
A dream so sweet would die as a rainbow dies,
As a sunbow laughs and is lost on the waves that range
And reck not of light that flickers or spray that flies.
But the sun withdraws not, the woodland shrinks not or sighs,
No sweet thing sickens with sense or with fear of change;
Light wounds not, darkness blinds not, my steadfast eyes.

Only the soul in my sense that receives the soul
Whence now my spirit is kindled with breathless bliss

Knows well if the light that wounds it with love makes whole,
If hopes that carol be louder than fears that hiss,
If truth be spoken of flowers and of waves that kiss,
Of clouds and stars that contend for a sun-bright goal.
And yet may I dream that I dream not indeed of this?

An earth-born dreamer, constrained by the bonds of birth,
Held fast by the flesh, compelled by his veins that beat
And kindle to rapture or wrath, to desire or to mirth,
May hear not surely the fall of immortal feet,
May feel not surely if heaven upon earth be sweet;
And here is my sense fulfilled of the joys of earth,
Light, silence, bloom, shade, murmur of leaves that meet.

Bloom, fervour, and perfume of grasses and flowers aglow,
Breathe and brighten about me: the darkness gleams,
The sweet light shivers and laughs on the slopes below,
Made soft by leaves that lighten and change like dreams;
The silence thrills with the whisper of secret streams
That well from the heart of the woodland: these I know:
Earth bore them, heaven sustained them with showers and beams.

I lean my face to the heather, and drink the sun
Whose flame-lit odour satiates the flowers: mine eyes
Close, and the goal of delight and of life is one:
No more I crave of earth or her kindred skies.
No more? But the joy that springs from them smiles and flies:
The sweet work wrought of them surely, the good work done,
If the mind and the face of the season be loveless, dies.

Thee, therefore, thee would I come to, cleave to, cling,
If haply thy heart be kind and thy gifts be good,
Unknown sweet spirit, whose vesture is soft in spring,
In summer splendid, in autumn pale as the wood
That shudders and wanes and shrinks as a shamed thing should,
In winter bright as the mail of a war-worn king
Who stands where foes fled far from the face of him stood.

My spirit or thine is it, breath of thy life or of mine,
Which fills my sense with a rapture that casts out fear?
Pan's dim frown wanes, and his wild eyes brighten as thine,
Transformed as night or as day by the kindling year.
Earth-born, or mine eye were withered that sees, mine ear
That hears were stricken to death by the sense divine,
Earth-born I know thee: but heaven is about me here.

The terror that whispers in darkness and flames in light,
The doubt that speaks in the silence of earth and sea,
The sense, more fearful at noon than in midmost night,
Of wrath scarce hushed and of imminent ill to be,
Where are they? Heaven is as earth, and as heaven to me
Earth: for the shadows that sundered them here take flight;
And nought is all, as am I, but a dream of thee.

ON THE SOUTH COAST.

To Theodore Watts.

Hills and valleys where April rallies his
radiant squadron of flowers and birds,
Steep strange beaches and lustrous reaches
of fluctuant sea that the land engirds,
Fields and downs that the sunrise crowns
with life diviner than lives in words,

Day by day of resurgent May salute the sun
with sublime acclaim,
Change and brighten with hours that lighten
and darken, girdled with cloud or flame;
Earth's fair face in alternate grace beams,
blooms, and lowers, and is yet the same.

Twice each day the divine sea's play makes
glad with glory that comes and goes
Field and street that her waves keep sweet,
when past the bounds of their old repose,
Fast and fierce in renewed reverse, the foam-
flecked estuary ebbs and flows.

Broad and bold through the stays of old staked
fast with trunks of the wildwood tree,
Up from shoreward, impelled far forward, by
marsh and meadow, by lawn and lea,
Inland still at her own wild will swells, rolls,
and revels the surging sea.

Strong as time, and as faith sublime,—clothed
round with shadows of hopes and fears,
Nights and morrows, and joys and sorrows,
alive with passion of prayers and tears,—
Stands the shrine that has seen decline eight
hundred waxing and waning years.

Tower set square to the storms of air and
change of season that glooms and glows,
Wall and roof of it tempest-proof, and equal
ever to suns and snows,
Bright with riches of radiant niches and pil-
lars smooth as a straight stem grows.

Aisle and nave that the whelming wave of
time has whelmed not or touched or
neared,
Arch and vault without stain or fault, by
hands of craftsmen we know not reared,
Time beheld them, and time was quelled;
and change passed by them as one that
feared.

Time that flies as a dream, and dies as dreams
that die with the sleep they feed,
Here alone in a garb of stone incarnate stands
as a god indeed,
Stern and fair, and of strength to bear all
burdens mortal to man's frail seed.

Men and years are as leaves or tears that
storm or sorrow is fain to shed:
These go by as the winds that sigh, and none
takes note of them quick or dead:
Time, whose breath is their birth and death,
folds here his pinions, and bows his head.

Still the sun that beheld begun the work
wrought here of unwearied hands
Sees, as then, though the Red King's men
held ruthless rule over lawless lands,
Stand their massive design, impassive, pure
and proud as a virgin stands.

Statelier still as the years fulfil their count,
subserving her sacred state,
Grows the hoary grey church whose story
silence utters and age makes great:
Statelier seems it than shines in dreams the
face unveiled of unvanquished fate.

Fate, more high than the star-shown sky,
more deep than waters unsounded, shines
Keen and far as the final star on souls that
seek not for charms or signs;
Yet more bright is the love-shown light of
men's hands lighted in songs or shrines.

Love and trust that the grave's deep dust can
soil not, neither may fear put out,
Witness yet that their record set stands fast,
though years be as hosts in rout,
Spent and slain; but the signs remain that
beat back darkness and cast forth doubt.

Men that wrought by the grace of thought
and toil things goodlier than praise dare
trace,
Fair as all that the world may call most fair,
save only the sea's own face,
Shrines or songs that the world's change
wrongs not, live by grace of their own
gift's grace.

Dead, their names that the night reclaims—
alive, their works that the day relumes—
Sink and stand, as in stone and sand engraven:
none may behold their tombs:
Nights and days shall record their praise
while here this flower of their grafting
blooms.

Flower more fair than the sun-thrilled air
bids laugh and lighten and wax and rise,
Fruit more bright than the fervent light sus-
tains with strength from the kindled skies,
Flower and fruit that the deathless root of
man's love rears though the man's name
dies.

Stately stands it, the work of hands unknown
of: statelier, afar and near,
Rise around it the heights that bound our
landward gaze from the seaboard here;
Downs that swerve and aspire, in curve and
change of heights that the dawn holds
dear.

Dawn falls fair on the grey walls there con-
fronting dawn, on the low green lea,
Lone and sweet as for fairies' feet held sacred,
silent and strange and free,
Wild and wet with its rills; but yet more fair
falls dawn on the fairer sea.

Eastward, round by the high green bound of
hills that fold the remote fields in,
Strive and shine on the low sea-line fleet
waves and beams when the days begin;
Westward glow, when the days burn low, the
sun that yields and the stars that win.

Rose-red eve on the seas that heave sinks
fair as dawn when the first ray peers;
Winds are glancing from sunbright Lancing
to Shoreham, crowned with the grace of
years;
Shoreham, clad with the sunset, glad and
grave with glory that death reveres.

Death, more proud than the kings' heads
bowed before him, stronger than all
things, bows
Here his head: as if death were dead, and
kingship plucked from his crownless
brows,
Life hath here such a face of cheer as change
appals not and time avows.

Skies fulfilled with the sundown, stilled and
splendid, spread as a flower that spreads,
Pave with rarer device and fairer than
heaven's the luminous oyster-beds,
Grass-embanked, and in square plots ranked,
inlaid with gems that the sundown sheds.

Squares more bright and with lovelier light
than heaven that kindled it shines with
shine
Warm and soft as the dome aloft, but heaven-
lier yet than the sun's own shrine:
Heaven is high, but the water-sky lit here
seems deeper and more divine.

Flowers on flowers, that the whole world's
bowers may show not, here may the sun-
set show,
Lightly graven in the waters paven with
ghostly gold by the clouds aglow:
Bright as love is the vault above, but love-
lier lightens the wave below.

Rosy grey, or as fiery spray full-plumed, or
greener than emerald, gleams
Plot by plot as the skies allot for each its
glory, divine as dreams
Lit with fire of appeased desire which sounds
the secret of all that seems;

Dreams that show what we fain would know,
and know not save by the grace of
sleep,
Sleep whose hands have removed the bands
that eyes long waking and fain to weep
Feel fast bound on them—light around them
strange, and darkness above them steep.

Yet no vision that heals division of love from
love, and renews awhile
Life and breath in the lips where death has
quenched the spirit of speech and smile,
Shews on earth, or in heaven's mid mirth,
where no fears enter or doubts defile,

Aught more fair than the radiant air and
water here by the twilight wed,
Here made one by the waning sun whose last
love quickens to rosebright red
Half the crown of the soft high down that
rears to northward its wood-girt head.

There, when day is at height of sway, men's
eyes who stand, as we oft have stood,

High where towers with its world of flowers the golden spinny that flanks the wood,
See before and around them shore and seaboard glad as their gifts are good.

Higher and higher to the north aspire the green smooth-swelling unending downs;
East and west on the brave earth's breast glow girdle-jewels of gleaming towns;
Southward shining, the lands declining subside in peace that the sea's light crowns.

Westward wide in its fruitful pride the plain lies lordly with plenteous grace;
Fair as dawn's when the fields and lawns desire her glitters the glad land's face:
Eastward yet is the sole sign set of elder days and a lordlier race.

Down beneath us afar, where seethe in wilder weather the tides aflow,
Hurled up hither and drawn down thither in quest of rest that they may not know,
Still as dew on a flower the blue broad stream now sleeps in the fields below.

Mild and bland in the fair green land it smiles, and takes to its heart the sky;
Scarce the meads and the fens, the reeds and grasses, still as they stand or lie,
Wear the palm of a statelier calm than rests on waters that pass them by.

Yet shall these, when the winds and seas of equal days and coequal nights
Rage, rejoice, and uplift a voice whose sound is even as a sword that smites,
Felt and heard as a doomsman's word from seaward reaches to landward heights,

Lift their heart up, and take their part of triumph, swollen and strong with rage,
Rage elate with desire and great with pride that tempest and storm assuage;
So their chime in the ear of time has rung from age to rekindled age.

Fair and dear is the land's face here, and fair man's work as a man's may be:
Dear and fair as the sunbright air is here the record that speaks him free;
Free by birth of a sacred earth, and regent ever of all the sea.

AN AUTUMN VISION.

October 31, 1889.

Ζεφύρου γίγαντος αὔρᾳ.

I.

Is it Midsummer here in the heavens that illumine October on earth?
Can the year, when his heart is fulfilled with desire of the days of his mirth,
Redeem them, recall, or remember?
For a memory recalling the rapture of earth, and redeeming the sky,
Shines down from the heights to the depths: will the watchword of dawn be July
When to-morrow acclaims November?
The stern salutation of sorrow to death or repentance to shame
Was all that the season was wont to accord her of grace or acclaim;
No lightnings of love and of laughter.
But here, in the laugh of the loud west wind from around and above,
In the flash of the waters beneath him, what sound or what light but of love
Rings round him or leaps forth after?

II.

Wind beloved of earth and sky and sea beyond all winds that blow,
Wind whose might in fight was England's on her mightiest warrior day,
South-west wind, whose breath for her was life, and fire to scourge her foe,
Steel to smite and death to drive him down an unreturning way,
Well-beloved and welcome, sounding all the clarions of the sky,
Rolling all the marshalled waters toward the charge that storms the shore,
We receive, acclaim, salute thee, we who live and dream and die,
As the mightiest mouth of song that ever spake acclaimed of yore.
We that live as they that perish praise thee, lord of cloud and wave,
Wind of winds, clothed on with darkness whence as lightning light comes forth.

We that know thee strong to guard and smite,
to scatter and to save,
We to whom the south-west wind is dear
as Athens held the north.
He for her waged war as thou for us against
all powers defiant,
Fleets full-fraught with storm from Per-
sia, laden deep with death from Spain:
Thee the giant god of song and battle hailed
as god and giant,
Yet not his but ours the land is whence thy
praise should ring and rain;
Rain as rapture shed from song, and ring as
trumpets blown for battle,
Sound and sing before thee, loud and
glad as leaps and sinks the sea:
Yea, the sea's white steeds are curbed and
spurred of thee, and pent as cattle,
Yet they laugh with love and pride to
live, subdued not save of thee.
Ears that hear thee hear in heaven the sound
of widening wings gigantic,
Eyes that see the cloud-lift westward see
thy darkening brows divine;
Wings whose measure is the limit of the limit-
less Atlantic,
Brows that bend, and bid the sovereign
sea submit her soul to thine.

III.

Twelve days since is it—twelve days gone,
Lord of storm, that a storm-bow shone
Higher than sweeps thy sublime dark wing,
Fair as dawn is and sweet like spring?

Never dawn in the deep wide east
Spread so splendid and strange a feast,
Whence the soul as it drank and fed
Felt such rapture of wonder shed.

Never spring in the wild wood's heart
Felt such flowers at her footfall start,
Born of earth, as arose on sight
Born of heaven and of storm and light.

Stern and sullen, the grey grim sea
Swelled and strove as in toils, though free,
Free as heaven, and as heaven sublime,
Clear as heaven of the toils of time.

IV.

Suddenly, sheer from the heights to the depths
of the sky and the sea,
Sprang from the darkness alive as a vision of
life to be
Glory triune and transcendent of colour afar
and afire,
Arching and darkening the darkness with
light as of dream or desire.
Heaven, in the depth of its height, shone wist-
ful and wan from above:
Earth from beneath, and the sea, shone
stricken and breathless with love.
As a shadow may shine, so shone they; as
ghosts of the viewless blest,
That sleep hath sight of alive in a rapture of
sunbright rest,
The green earth glowed and the grey sky
gleamed for a wondrous while;
And the storm's full frown was crossed by the
light of its own deep smile.
As the darkness of thought and of passion is
touched by the light that gives
Life deathless as love from the depth of a
spirit that sees and lives,
From the soul of a seer and a singer, wherein
as a scroll unfurled
Lies open the scripture of light and of dark-
ness, the word of the world,
So, shapeless and measureless, lurid as an-
guish and haggard as crime,
Pale as the front of oblivion and dark as the
heart of time,
The wild wan heaven at its height was assailed
and subdued and made
More fair than the skies that know not of
storm and endure not shade.
The grim sea-swell, grey, sleepless, and sad
as a soul estranged,
Shone, smiled, took heart, and was glad of its
wrath: and the world's face changed.

V.

Up from moorlands northward gleaming
Even to heaven's transcendent height,
Clothed with massive cloud, and seeming
All one fortress reared of night,
Down to where the deep sea, dreaming
Angry dreams, lay dark and white,
White as death and dark as fate,
Heaving with the strong wind's weight,
Sad with stormy pride of state,
One full rainbow shone elate.

Up from inmost memory's dwelling
Where the light of life abides,
Where the past finds tongue, foretelling
Time that comes and grace that guides,

Power that saves and sways, compelling
  Souls that ebb and flow like tides,
Shone or seemed to shine and swim
Through the cloud-surf great and grim,
Thought's live surge, the soul of him
By whose light the sun looks dim.

In what synod were they sitting,
  All the gods and lords of time,
Whence they watched as fen-fires flitting
  Years and names of men sublime,
When their counsels found it fitting
  One should stand where none might climb—
None of man begotten, none
Born of men beneath the sun
Till the race of time be run,
Save this heaven-enfranchised one?

With what rapture of creation
  Was the soul supernal thrilled,
With what pride of adoration
  Was the world's heart fired and filled,
Heaved in heavenward exultation
  Higher than hopes or dreams might build,
Grave with awe not known while he
Was not, mad with glorious glee
As the sun-saluted sea,
When his hour bade Shakespeare be?

VI.

There, clear as night beholds her crowning seven,
The sea beheld his likeness set in heaven.
The shadow of his spirit full in sight
Shone: for the shadow of that soul is light.
Nor heaven alone bore witness: earth avowed
Him present, and acclaimed of storm aloud.
From the arching sky to the ageless hills and sea
The whole world, visible, audible, was he:
Each part of all that wove that wondrous whole
The raiment of the presence of his soul.
The sun that smote and kissed the dark to death
Spake, smiled, and strove, like song's triumphant breath;
The soundless cloud whose thunderous heart was dumb
Swelled, lowered, and shrank to feel its conqueror come.
Yet high from heaven its empire vast and vain
Frowned, and renounced not night's reluctant reign.
The serpentine swift sounds and shapes wherein
The stainless sea mocks earth and death and sin,
Crawls dark as craft, or flashes keen as hate,
Subdued and insubmissive, strong like fate
And weak like man, bore wrathful witness yet
That storms and sins are more than suns that set;
That evil everlasting, girt for strife
Eternal, wars with hope as death with life.
The dark sharp shifting wind that bade the waves
Falter, lose heart, bow down like foes made slaves,
And waxed within more bitter as they bowed,
Baffling the sea, swallowing the sun with cloud,
Devouring fast as fire on earth devours
And hungering hard as frost that feeds on flowers,
Clothed round with fog that reeked as fume from hell,
And darkening with its miscreative spell
Light, glad and keen and splendid as the sword
Whose heft had known Othello's hand its lord,
Spake all the soul that hell drew back to greet
And felt its fire shrink shuddering from his feet.
Far off the darkness darkened, and recoiled,
And neared again, and triumphed: and the coiled
Colourless cloud and sea discoloured grew
Conscious of horror huge as heaven, and knew
Where Goneril's soul made chill and foul the mist,
And all the leprous life in Regan hissed.
Fierce homeless ghosts, rejected of the pit,
From hell to hell of storm fear watched them flit.
About them and before, the dull grey gloom
Shuddered, and heaven seemed hateful as the tomb
That shrinks from resurrection; and from out
That sullen hell which girt their shades about
The nether soul that lurks and lowers within
Man, made of dust and fire and shame and sin.

Breathed: all the cloud that felt it breathe and blight
Was blue as plague or black as thunderous night.
Elect of hell, the children of his hate
Thronged, as to storm sweet heaven's triumphal gate.
The terror of his giving rose and shone
Imminent: life had put its likeness on.
But higher than all its horrent height of shade
Shone sovereign, seen by light itself had made,
Above the woes of all the world, above
Life, sin, and death, his myriad-minded love.
From landward heights whereon the radiance leant
Full-fraught from heaven, intense and imminent,
To depths wherein the seething strengths of cloud
Scarce matched the wrath of waves whereon they bowed,
From homeborn pride and kindling love of home
To the outer skies and seas of fire and foam,
From splendour soft as dew that sundawn thrills
To gloom that shudders round the world it fills,
From midnights murmuring round Titania's ear
To midnights maddening round the rage of Lear,
The wonder woven of storm and sun became
One with the light that lightens from his name.
The music moving on the sea that felt
The storm-wind even as snows of springtide melt
Was blithe as Ariel's hand or voice might make
And bid all grief die gladly for its sake.
And there the soul alive in ear and eye
That watched the wonders of an hour pass by
Saw brighter than all stars that heaven inspheres
The silent splendour of Cordelia's tears,
Felt in the whispers of the quickening wind
The radiance of the laugh of Rosalind,
And heard, in sounds that melt the souls of men
With love of love, the tune of Imogen.

VII.

For the strong north-east is not strong to subdue and to slay the divine south-west,
And the darkness is less than the light that it darkens, and dies in reluctant rest.
It hovers and hangs on the labouring and trembling ascent of the dawn from the deep,
Till the sun's eye quicken the world and the waters, and smite it again into sleep.
Night, holy and starry, the fostress of souls, with the fragrance of heaven in her breath,
Subdues with the sense of her godhead the forces and mysteries of sorrow and death.
Eternal as dawn's is the comfort she gives: but the mist that beleaguers and slays
Comes, passes, and is not: the strength of it withers, appalledor assuaged by the day's.
Faith, haggard as Fear that had borne her, and dark as the sire that begat her, Despair,
Held rule on the soul of the world and the song of it saddening through ages that were;
Dim centuries that darkened and brightened and darkened again, and the soul of their song
Was great as their grief, and sublime as their suffering, and strong as their sorrows were strong.
It knew not, it saw not, but shadows triune, and evoked by the strength of their spell
Dark hell, and the mountain of anguish, and heaven that was hollower and harder than hell.
These are not: the womb of the darkness that bare them rejects them, and knows them no more:
Thought, fettered in misery and iron, revives in the light that it lived in of yore.
For the soul that is wisdom and freedom, the spirit of England redeemed from her past,
Speaks life through the lips of the master and lord of her children, the first and the last.
Thought, touched by his hand and redeemed by his breath, sees, hears, and accepts from above
The limitless lightnings of vision and passion, the measureless music of love.

A SWIMMER'S DREAM.

NOVEMBER 4, 1889.

Somno mollior unda.

I.

DAWN is dim on the dark soft water,
Soft and passionate, dark and sweet.
Love's own self was the deep sea's daughter,
Fair and flawless from face to feet,
Hailed of all when the world was golden,
Loved of lovers whose names beholden
Thrill men's eyes as with light of olden
Days more glad than their flight was fleet.

So they sang: but for men that love her,
Souls that hear not her word in vain,
Earth beside her and heaven above her
Seem but shadows that wax and wane.
Softer than sleep's are the sea's caresses,
Kinder than love's that betrays and blesses,
Blither than spring's when her flowerful tresses
Shake forth sunlight and shine with rain.

All the strength of the waves that perish
Swells beneath me and laughs and sighs,
Sighs for love of the life they cherish,
Laughs to know that it lives and dies,
Dies for joy of its life, and lives
Thrilled with joy that its brief death gives—
Death whose laugh or whose breath forgives
Change that bids it subside and rise.

II.

Hard and heavy, remote but nearing,
Sunless hangs the severe sky's weight,
Cloud on cloud, though the wind be veering
Heaped on high to the sundawn's gate.
Dawn and even and noon are one,
Veiled with vapour and void of sun;
Nought in sight or in fancied hearing
Now less mighty than time or fate.

The grey sky gleams and the grey seas glimmer,
Pale and sweet as a dream's delight,
As a dream's where darkness and light seem dimmer,
Touched by dawn or subdued by night.
The dark wind, stern and sublime and sad,
Swings the rollers to westward, clad
With lustrous shadow that lures the swimmer,
Lures and lulls him with dreams of light.

Light, and sleep, and delight, and wonder,
Change, and rest, and a charm of cloud,
Fill the world of the skies whereunder
Heaves and quivers and pants aloud
All the world of the waters, hoary
Now, but clothed with its own live glory,
That mates the lightning and mocks the thunder
With light more living and word more proud.

III.

Far off westward, whither sets the sounding strife,
Strife more sweet than peace, of shoreless waves whose glee
Scorns the shore and loves the wind that leaves them free,
Strange as sleep and pale as death and fair as life,
Shifts the moonlight-coloured sunshine on the sea.

Toward the sunset's goal the sunless waters crowd,
Fast as autumn days toward winter: yet it seems
Here that autumn wanes not, here that woods and streams
Lose not heart and change not likeness, chilled and bowed
Warped and wrinkled: here the days are fair as dreams.

IV.

O russet-robed November,
What ails thee so to smile?
Chill August, pale September,
Endured a woful while,
And fell as falls an ember
From forth a flameless pile:
But golden-girt November
Bids all she looks on smile.

The lustrous foliage, waning
As wanes the morning moon,
Here falling, here refraining,
Outbraves the pride of June

With statelier semblance, feigning
No fear lest death be soon:
As though the woods thus waning
Should wax to meet the moon.

As though, when fields lie stricken
By grey December's breath,
These lordlier growths that sicken
And die for fear of death
Should feel the sense requicken
That hears what springtide saith
And thrills for love, spring-stricken
And pierced with April's breath.

The keen white-winged north-easter
That stings and spurs thy sea
Doth yet but feed and feast her
With glowing sense of glee:
Calm chained her, storm released her,
And storm's glad voice was he:
South-wester or north-easter,
Thy winds rejoice the sea.

V.

A dream, a dream is it all—the season,
The sky, the water, the wind, the shore?
A day-born dream of divine unreason,
A marvel moulded of sleep—no more?
For the cloudlike wave that my limbs while cleaving
Feel as in slumber beneath them heaving
Soothes the sense as to slumber, leaving
Sense of nought that was known of yore.

A purer passion, a lordlier leisure,
A peace more happy than lives on land,
Fulfils with pulse of diviner pleasure
The dreaming head and the steering hand.
I lean my cheek to the cold grey pillow,
The deep soft swell of the full broad billow,
And close mine eyes for delight past measure,
And wish the wheel of the world would stand.

The wild-winged hour that we fain would capture
Falls as from heaven that its light feet clomb,
So brief, so soft, and so full the rapture
Was felt that soothed me with sense of home.
To sleep, to swim, and to dream, for ever—
Such joy the vision of man saw never;
For here too soon will a dark day sever
The sea-bird's wing from the sea-wave's foam.

A dream, and more than a dream, and dimmer
At once and brighter than dreams that flee,
The moment's joy of the seaward swimmer
Abides, remembered as truth may be.
Not all the joy and not all the glory
Must fade as leaves when the woods wax hoary;
For there the downs and the sea-banks glimmer,
And here to south of them swells the sea.

GRACE DARLING.

TAKE, O star of all our seas, from not an alien hand,
Homage paid of song bowed down before thy glory's face,
Thou the living light of all our lovely stormy strand,
Thou the brave north-country's very glory of glories, Grace.

Loud and dark about the lighthouse rings and glares the night;
Glares with foam-lit gloom and darkling fire of storm and spray,
Rings with roar of winds in chase and rage of waves in flight,
Howls and hisses as with mouths of snakes and wolves at bay.

Scarce the cliffs of the islets, scarce the walls of Joyous Gard,
Flash to sight between the deadlier lightnings of the sea:
Storm is lord and master of a midnight evil-starred,
Nor may sight or fear discern what evil stars may be.

Dark as death and white as snow the sea-
swell scowls and shines,
Heaves and yearns and pants for prey,
from ravening lip to lip,
Strong in rage of rapturous anguish, lines
on hurtling lines,
Ranks on charging ranks, that break and
rend the battling ship.
All the night is mad and murderous: who
shall front the night?
Not the prow that labours, helpless as a
storm-blown leaf,
Where the rocks and waters, darkling depth
and beetling height,
Rage with wave on shattering wave and
thundering reef on reef.
Death is fallen upon the prisoners there of
darkness, bound
Like as thralls with links of iron fast in
bonds of doom;
How shall any way to break the bands of
death be found,
Any hand avail to pluck them from that
raging tomb?
All the night is great with child of death: no
stars above
Show them hope in heaven, no lights from
shoreward help on earth.
Is there help or hope to seaward, is there help
in love,
Hope in pity, where the ravening hounds
of storm make mirth?
Where the light that shows the naked eyeless
face of Death
Nearer, laughing dumb and grim across
the loud live storm?
Not in human heart or hand or speech of
human breath,
Surely, nor in saviours found of mortal
face or form.
Yet below the light, between the reefs, a skiff
shot out
Seems a sea-bird fain to breast and brave
the strait fierce pass
Whence the channelled roar of waters driven
in raging rout,
Pent and pressed and maddened, speaks
their monstrous might and mass.
Thunder heaves and howls about them,
lightning leaps and flashes,
Hard at hand, not high in heaven, but
close between the walls
Heaped and hollowed of the storms of old,
whence reels and crashes
All the rage of all the unbaffled wave that
breaks and falls
Who shall thwart the madness and the glad-
ness of it, laden
Full with heavy fate, and joyous as the
birds that whirl?
Nought in heaven or earth, if not one mortal-
moulded maiden,
Nought if not the soul that glorifies a north
land girl.
Not the rocks that break may baffle, not the
reefs that thwart
Stay the ravenous rapture of the waves that
crowd and leap
Scarce their flashing laughter shows the hun-
ger of their heart,
Scarce their lion-throated roar the wrath at
heart they keep.
Child and man and woman in the grasp of
death clenched fast
Tremble, clothed with darkness round
about, and scarce draw breath,
Scarce lift eyes up toward the light that saves
not, scarc may cast
Thought or prayer up, caught and tram-
melled in the snare of death.
Not as sea-mews cling and laugh or sun their
plumes and sleep
Cling and cower the wild night's waifs of
shipwreck, blind with fear,
Where the fierce reef scarce yields foothold
that a bird might keep,
And the clamorous darkness deadens eye
and deafens ear.
Yet beyond their helpless hearing, out of
hopeless sight,
Saviours, armed and girt upon with
strength of heart, fare forth,
Sire and daughter, hand on oar and face
against the night,
Maid and man whose names are beacons
ever to the North.
Nearer now; but all the madness of the storm-
ing surf
Hounds and roars them back; but roars
and hounds them back in vain:
As a pleasure-skiff may graze the lake-em
banking turf,
So the boat that bears them grates the
rock where-toward they strain.
Dawn as fierce and haggard as the face of
night scarce guides
Toward the cries that rent and clove the
darkness, crying for aid,

Hours on hours, across the engorged reluctance of the tides,
Sire and daughter, high-souled man and mightier-hearted maid.
Not the bravest land that ever breasted war's grim sea,
Hurled her foes back harried on the lowlands whence they came,
Held her own and smote her smiters down, while such durst be,
Shining northward, shining southward, as the aurorean flame,
Not our mother, not Northumberland, brought ever forth,
Though no southern shore may match the sons that kiss her mouth,
Children worthier all the birthright given of the ardent north
Where the fire of hearts outburns the suns that fire the south.
Even such fire was this that lit them, not from lowering skies
Where the darkling dawn flagged, stricken in the sun's own shrine,
Down the gulf of storm subsiding, till their earnest eyes
Find the relics of the ravening night that spared but nine.
Life by life the man redeems them, head by storm-worn head,
While the girl's hand stays the boat whereof the waves are fain:
Ah, but woe for one, the mother clasping fast her dead!
Happier, had the surges slain her with her children slain.
Back they bear, and bring between them safe the woful nine,
Where above the ravenous Hawkers fixed at watch for prey
Storm and calm behold the Longstone's towering signal shine
Now as when that labouring night brought forth a shuddering day.
Now as then, though like the hounds of storm against her snarling
All the clamorous years between us storm down many a fame
As our sires beheld before us we behold Grace Darling
Crowned and throned our queen, and as they hailed we hail her name.
Nay, not ours alone, her kinsfolk born, though chiefliest ours,
East and west and south acclaim her queen of England's maids,
Star more sweet than all their stars and flower than all their flowers,
Higher in heaven and earth than star that sets or flower that fades.
How should land or sea that nurtured her forget, or love
Hold not fast her fame for us while aught is borne in mind?
Land and sea beneath us, sun and moon and stars above,
Bear the bright soul witness, seen of all but souls born blind.
Stars and moon and sun may wax and wane, subside and rise,
Age on age as flake on flake of showering snows be shed:
Not till earth be sunless, not till death strike blind the skies,
May the deathless love that waits on deathless deeds be dead.

Years on years have withered since beside the hearth once thine
I, too young to have seen thee, touched thy father's hallowed hand:
Thee and him shall all men see for ever, stars that shine
While the sea that spared thee girds and glorifies the land.

LOCH TORRIDON.

To E. H.

THE dawn of night more fair than morning rose,
Stars hurrying forth on stars, as snows on snows
Haste when the wind and winter bid them speed.
Vague miles of moorland road behind us lay
Scarce traversed ere the day

Sank, and the sun forsook us at our need,
Belated. Where we thought to have rested, rest
Was none; for soft Maree's dim quivering breast,
Bound round with gracious inland girth of green
And fearless of the wild wave-wandering West,
Shone shelterless for strangers; and unseen
The goal before us lay
Of all our blithe and strange and strenuous day.
For when the northering road faced westward —when
The dark sharp sudden gorge dropped seaward—then,
Beneath the stars, between the steeps, the track
We followed, lighted not of moon or sun,
And plunging whither none
Might guess, while heaven and earth were hoar and black,
Seemed even the dim still pass whence none turns back:
And through the twilight leftward of the way,
And down the dark, with many a laugh and leap,
The light blithe hill-streams shone from scaur to steep
In glittering pride of play;
And ever while the night grew great and deep
We felt but saw not what the hills would keep
Sacred awhile from sense of moon or star;
And full and far
Beneath us, sweet and strange as heaven may be,
The sea.

The very sea: no mountain-moulded lake
Whose fluctuant shapeliness is fain to take
Shape from the steadfast shore that rules it round,
And only from the storms a casual sound:
The sea, that harbours in her heart sublime
The supreme heart of music deep as time,
And in her spirit strong
The spirit of all imaginable song.

Not a whisper or lisp from the waters: the skies were not silenter. Peace
Was between them; a passionless rapture of respite as soft as release.
Not a sound, but a sense that possessed and pervaded with patient delight
The soul and the body, clothed round with the comfort of limitless night.
Night infinite, living, adorable, loved of the land and the sea:
Night, mother of mercies, who saith to the spirits in prison, Be free.
And softer than dewfall, and kindlier than starlight, and keener than wine,
Came round us the fragrance of waters, the life of the breath of the brine.
We saw not, we heard not, the face or the voice of the waters: we knew
By the darkling delight of the wind as the sense of the sea in it grew.
By the pulse of the darkness about us enkindled and quickened, that here,
Unseen and unheard of us, surely the goal we had faith in was near.
A silence diviner than music, a darkness diviner than light,
Fulfilled as from heaven with a measureless comfort the measure of night.

But never a roof for shelter
And never a sign for guide
Rose doubtful or visible: only
And hardly and gladly we heard
The soft waves whisper and welter,
Subdued, and allured to subside,
By the mild night's magic: the lonely
Sweet silence was soothed, not stirred,
By the noiseless noise of the gleaming
Glad ripples, that played and sighed,
Kissed, laughed, recoiled, and relented,
Whispered, flickered, and fled.
No season was this for dreaming
How oft, with a stormier tide,
Had the wrath of the winds been vented
On sons of the tribes long dead:
The tribes whom time, and the changes
Of things, and the stress of doom,
Have erased and effaced; forgotten
As wrecks or weeds of the shore
In sight of the stern hill-ranges
That hardly may change their gloom
When the fruits of the years wax rotten
And the seed of them springs no more
For the dim strait footway dividing
The waters that breathed below
Led safe to the kindliest of shelters
That ever awoke into light:

And still in remembrance abiding
Broods over the stars that glow
And the water that eddies and welters
The passionate peace of the night.

All night long, in the world of sleep,
Skies and waters were soft and deep:
Shadow clothed them, and silence made
Soundless music of dream and shade:
All above us, the livelong night,
Shadow, kindled with sense of light;
All around us, the brief night long,
Silence, laden with sense of song.
Stars and mountains without, we knew,
Watched and waited, the soft night through:
All unseen, but divined and dear,
Thrilled the touch of the sea's breath near:
All unheard, but alive like sound,
Throbbed the sense of the sea's life round:
Round us, near us, in depth and height,
Soft as darkness and keen as light.

And the dawn leapt in at my casement: and there, as I rose, at my feet
No waves of the landlocked waters, no lake submissive and sweet,
Soft slave of the lordly seasons, whose breath may loose it or freeze;
But to left and to right and ahead was the ripple whose pulse is the sea's.
From the gorge we had travelled by starlight the sunrise, winged and aflame,
Shone large on the live wide wavelets that shuddered with joy as it came;
As it came and caressed and possessed them, till panting and laughing with light
From mountain to mountain the water was kindled and stung to delight.
And the grey gaunt heights that embraced and constrained and compelled it were glad,
And the rampart of rock, stark naked, that thwarted and barred it, was clad
With a stern grey splendour of sunrise: and scarce had I sprung to the sea
When the dawn and the water were wedded, the hills and the sky set free.

The chain of the night was broken: the waves that embraced me and smiled
And flickered and fawned in the sunlight, alive, unafraid, undefiled,
Were sweeter to swim in than air, though fulfilled with the mounting morn,
Could be for the birds whose triumph rejoiced that a day was born.
And a day was arisen indeed for us. Years and the changes of years
Clothed round with their joys and their sorrows, and dead as their hopes and their fears,
Lie noteless and nameless, unlit by remembrance or record of days
Worth wonder or memory, or cursing or blessing, or passion or praise,
Between us who live and forget not, but yearn with delight in it yet,
And the day we forget not, and never may live and may think to forget.
And the years that were kindlier and fairer, and kindled with pleasures as keen,
Have eclipsed not with lights or with shadows the light on the face of it seen.
For softly and surely, as nearer the boat that we gazed from drew,
The face of the precipice opened and bade us as birds pass through,
And the bark shot sheer to the sea through the strait of the sharp steep cleft,
The portal that opens with imminent rampires to right and to left,
Sublime as the sky they darken and strange as a spell-struck dream,
On the world unconfined of the mountains, the reign of the sea supreme,
The kingdom of westward waters, wherein when we swam we knew
The waves that we clove were boundless, the wind on our brows that blew
Had swept no land and no lake, and had warred not on tower or on tree,
But came on us hard out of heaven, and alive with the soul of the sea.

THE PALACE OF PAN.

INSCRIBED TO MY MOTHER.

SEPTEMBER, all glorious with gold, as a king
In the radiance of triumph attired,
Outlightening the summer, outsweetening the spring,
Broods wide on the woodlands with limitless wing,
A presence of all men desired.

Far eastward and westward the sun-coloured lands
Smile warm as the light on them smiles;
And statelier than temples upbuilded with hands,
Tall column by column, the sanctuary stands
Of the pine-forest's infinite aisles.

Mute worship, too fervent for praise or for prayer,
Possesses the spirit with peace,
Fulfilled with the breath of the luminous air,
The fragrance, the silence, the shadows as fair
As the rays that recede or increase.

Ridged pillars that redden aloft and aloof,
With never a branch for a nest,
Sustain the sublime indivisible roof,
To the storm and the sun in his majesty proof,
And awful as waters at rest.

Man's hand hath not measured the height of them thought
May measure not, awe may not know;
In its shadow the woofs of the woodland are wrought;
As a bird is the sun in the toils of them caught,
And the flakes of it scattered as snow.

As the shreds of a plumage of gold on the ground
The sun-flakes by multitudes lie,
Shed loose as the petals of roses discrowned
On the floors of the forest engilt and embrowned
And reddened afar and anigh.

Dim centuries with darkling inscrutable hands
Have reared and secluded the shrine
For gods that we know not, and kindled as brands
On the altar the years that are dust, and their sands
Time's glass has forgotten for sign.

A temple whose transepts are measured by miles,
Whose chancel has morning for priest,
Whose floor-work the foot of no spoiler defiles,
Whose musical silence no music beguiles,
No festivals limit its feast.

The noon's ministration, the night's and the dawn's,
Conceals not, reveals not for man,
On the slopes of the herbless and blossomless lawns,
Some track of a nymph's or some trail of a faun's
To the place of the slumber of Pan.

Thought, kindled and quickened by worship and wonder
To rapture too sacred for fear
On the ways that unite or divide them in sunder,
Alone may discern if about them or under
Be token or trace of him here.

With passionate awe that is deeper than panic
The spirit subdued and unshaken
Takes heed of the godhead terrene and Titanic
Whose footfall is felt on the breach of volcanic
Sharp steeps that their fire has forsaken.

By a spell more serene than the dim necromantic
Dead charms of the past and the night,
Or the terror that lurked in the noon to make frantic
Where Etna takes shape from the limbs of gigantic
Dead gods disanointed of might,

The spirit made one with the spirit whose breath
Makes noon in the woodland sublime
Abides as entranced in a presence that saith
Things loftier than life and serener than death,
Triumphant and silent as time.

PINE RIDGE: September, 1893.

A YEAR'S CAROLS.

JANUARY.

HAIL, January, that bearest here
On snowbright breasts the babe-faced year
That weeps and trembles to be born.
Hail, maid and mother, strong and bright,
Hooded and cloaked and shod with white,
Whose eyes are stars that match the morn
Thy forehead braves the storm's bent bow,
Thy feet enkindle stars of snow.

FEBRUARY.

Wan February with weeping cheer,
Whose cold hand guides the youngling year
Down misty roads of mire and rime,
Before thy pale and fitful face
The shrill wind shifts the clouds apace
Through skies the morning scarce may climb.
Thine eyes are thick with heavy tears,
But lit with hopes that light the year's.

MARCH.

Hail, happy March, whose foot on earth
Rings as the blast of martial mirth
When trumpets fire men's hearts for fray.
No race of wild things winged or finned
May match the might that wings thy wind
Through air and sea, through scud and spray
Strong joy and thou were powers twin-born
Of tempest and the towering morn.

APRIL.

Crowned April, king whose kiss bade earth
Bring forth to time her lordliest birth
When Shakespeare from thy lips drew breath
And laughed to hold in one soft hand
A spell that bade the world's wheel stand,
And power on life, and power on death,
With quiring suns and sunbright showers
Praise him, the flower of all thy flowers.

MAY.

Hail, May, whose bark puts forth full-sailed
For summer; May, whom Chaucer hailed
With all his happy might of heart,
And gave thy rosebright daisy-tips
Strange fragrance from his amorous lips
That still thine own breath seems to part
And sweeten till each word they say
Is even a flower of flowering May.

JUNE.

Strong June, superb, serene, elate
With conscience of thy sovereign state
Untouched of thunder, though the storm
Scathe here and there thy shuddering skies
And bid its lightning cross thine eyes
With fire, thy golden hours inform
Earth and the souls of men with life
That brings forth peace from shining strife.

JULY.

Hail, proud July, whose fervent mouth
Bids even be morn and north be south
By grace and gospel of thy word,
Whence all the splendour of the sea
Lies breathless with delight in thee
And marvel at the music heard
From the ardent silent lips of noon
And midnight's rapturous plenilune.

AUGUST.

Great August, lord of golden lands,
Whose lordly joy through seas and strands
And all the red-ripe heart of earth
Strikes passion deep as life, and stills
The folded vales and folding hills
With gladness too divine for mirth,
The gracious glories of thine eyes
Make night a noon where darkness dies.

SEPTEMBER.

Hail, kind September, friend whose grace
Renews the bland year's bounteous face
With largess given of corn and wine
Through many a land that laughs with love
Of thee and all the heaven above,
More fruitful found than all save thine
Whose skies fulfil with strenuous cheer
The fervent fields that knew thee near.

OCTOBER.

October of the tawny crown,
Whose heavy-laden hands drop down
Blessing, the bounties of thy breath
And mildness of thy mellowing might
Fill earth and heaven with love and light
Too sweet for fear to dream of death
Or memory, while thy joy lives yet,
To know what joy would fain forget.

NOVEMBER.

Hail, soft November, though thy pale
Sad smile rebuke the words that hail
  Thy sorrow with no sorrowing words
Or gratulate thy grief with song
Less bitter than the winds that wrong
  Thy withering woodlands, where the birds
Keep hardly heart to sing or see
How fair thy faint wan face may be.

DECEMBER.

December, thou whose hallowing hands
On shuddering seas and hardening lands
  Set as a sacramental sign
The seal of Christmas felt on earth
As witness toward a new year's birth
  Whose promise makes thy death divine,
The crowning joy that comes of thee
Makes glad all grief on land or sea.

ENGLAND: AN ODE.

I.

SEA and strand, and a lordlier land than sea-
  tides rolling and rising sun
Clasp and lighten in climes that brighten with
  day when day that was here is done,
Call aloud on their children, proud with
  trust that future and past are one.

Far and near from the swan's nest here the
  storm-birds bred of her fair white breast,
Sons whose home was the sea-wave's foam,
  have borne the fame of her east and west;
North and south has the storm-wind's mouth
  rung praise of England and England's
  quest.

Fame, wherever her flag flew, never forbore
  to fly with an equal wing:
France and Spain with their warrior train
  bowed down before her as thrall to king;
India knelt at her feet, and felt her sway more
  fruitful of life than spring.

Darkness round them as iron bound fell off
  from races of elder name,
Slain at sight of her eyes, whose light bids
  freedom lighten and burn as flame;
Night endures not the touch that cures of
  kingship tyrants, and slaves of shame.

All the terror of time, where error and fear
  were lords of a world of slaves,
Age on age in resurgent rage and anguish
  darkening as waves on waves,
Fell or fled from a face that shed such grace
  as quickens the dust of graves.

Things of night at her glance took flight: the
  strengths of darkness recoiled and
  sank:
Sank the fires of the murderous pyres where-
  on wild agony writhed and shrank:
Rose the light of the reign of right from gulfs
  of years that the darkness drank.

Yet the might of her wings in flight, whence
  glory lightens and music rings,
Loud and bright as the dawn's, shall smite
  and still the discord of evil things,
Yet not slain by her radiant reign, but dark-
  ened now by her sail-stretched wings.

II.

Music made of change and conquest, glory
  born of evil slain,
Stilled the discord, slew the darkness, bade
  the lights of tempest wane,
Where the deathless dawn of England rose in
  sign that right should reign.

Mercy, where the tiger wallowed mad and
  blind with blood and lust,
Justice, where the jackal yelped and fed,
  and slaves allowed it just,
Rose as England's light on Asia rose, and
  smote them down to dust.

Justice bright as mercy, mercy girt by justice
  with her sword,
Smote and saved and raised and ruined, till
  the tyrant-ridden horde
Saw the lightning fade from heaven and knew
  the sun for God and lord.

Where the footfall sounds of England, where the smile of England shines,
Rings the tread and laughs the face of freedom, fair as hope divines
Days to be, more brave than ours and lit by lordlier stars for signs.

All our past acclaims our future: Shakespeare's voice and Nelson's hand,
Milton's faith and Wordsworth's trust in this our chosen and chainless land,
Bear us witness: come the world against her, England yet shall stand.

Earth and sea bear England witness if he lied who said it; he
Whom the winds that ward her, waves that clasp, and herb and flower and tree
Fed with English dews and sunbeams, hail as more than man may be.

No man ever spake as he that bade our England be but true,
Keep but faith with England fast and firm, and none should bid her rue;
None may speak as he: but all may know the sign that Shakespeare knew.

III.

From the springs of the dawn, from the depths of the noon, from the heights of the night that shine,
Hope, faith, and remembrance of glory that found but in England her throne and her shrine,
Speak louder than song may proclaim them, that here is the seal of them set for a sign.

And loud as the sea's voice thunders applause of the land that is one with the sea
Speaks Time in the ear of the people that never at heart was not inly free
The word of command that assures us of life, if we will but that life shall be;

If the race that is first of the races of men who behold unashamed the sun
Stand fast and forget not the sign that is given of the years and the wars that are done,
The token that all who are born of its blood should in heart as in blood be one.

The word of remembrance that lightens as fire from the steeps of the storm-lit past
Bids only the faith of our fathers endure in us, firm as they held it fast:
That the glory which was from the first upon England alone may endure to the last.

That the love and the hate may change not, the faith may not fade, nor the wrath nor scorn,
That shines for her sons and that burns for her foemen as fire of the night or the morn:
That the births of her womb may forget not the sign of the glory wherein they were born.

A light that is more than the sunlight, an air that is brighter than morning's breath,
Clothes England about as the strong sea clasps her, and answers the word that it saith;
The word that assures her of life if she change not, and choose not the ways of death.

Change darkens and lightens around her, alternate in hope and in fear to be:
Hope knows not if fear speak truth, nor fear whether hope be not blind as she:
But the sun is in heaven that beholds her immortal, and girdled with life by the sea.

ETON: AN ODE.

FOR THE FOUR HUNDRED AND FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDATION OF THE COLLEGE.

I.

FOUR hundred summers and fifty have shone on the meadows of Thames and died
Since Eton arose in an age that was darkness, and shone by his radiant side
As a star that the spell of a wise man's word bade live and ascend and abide.

And ever as time's flow brightened, a river more dark than the storm-clothed sea,
And age upon age rose fairer and larger in promise of hope set free,
With England Eton her child kept pace as a fostress of men to be.

And ever as earth waxed wiser, and softer
the beating of time's wide wings,
Since fate fell dark on her father, most hapless
and gentlest of star-crossed kings,
Her praise has increased as the chant of the
dawn that the choir of the noon outsings.

II.

Storm and cloud in the skies were loud, and
lightning mocked at the blind sun's
light;
War and woe on the land below shed heavier
shadow than falls from night;
Dark was earth at her dawn of birth as here
her record of praise is bright.

Clear and fair through her morning air the
light first laugh of the sunlit stage
Rose and rang as a fount that sprang from
depths yet dark with a spent storm's
rage,
Loud and glad as a boy's, and bade the sunrise
open on Shakespeare's age.

Lords of state and of war, whom fate found
strong in battle, in counsel strong,
Here, ere fate had approved them great,
abode their season, and thought not long:
Here too first was the lark's note nursed that
filled and flooded the skies with song.

III.

Shelley, lyric lord of England's lordliest
singers, here first heard
Ring from lips of poets crowned and dead
the Promethean word
Whence his soul took fire, and power to out-
soar the sunward-soaring bird.

Still the reaches of the river, still the light on
field and hill,
Still the memories held aloft as lamps for
hope's young fire to fill,
Shine, and while the light of England lives
shall shine for England still.

When four hundred more and fifty years have
risen and shone and set,
Bright with names that men remember, loud
with names that men forget,
Haply here shall Eton's record be what
England finds it yet.

THE UNION.

I.

THREE in one, but one in three,
God, who girt her with the sea,
Bade our Commonweal to be:
Nought, if now not one.
Though fraud and fear would sever
The bond assured for ever,
Their shameful strength shall never
Undo what heaven has done.

II.

South and North and West and East
Watch the ravens flock to feast,
Dense as round some death-struck beast,
Black as night is black.
Stand fast as faith together
In stress of treacherous weather
When hounds and wolves break tether
And Treason guides the pack.

III.

Lovelier than thy seas are strong,
Glorious Ireland, sword and song
Gird and crown thee: none may wrong,
Save thy sons alone.
The sea that laughs around us
Hath sundered not but bound us:
The sun's first rising found us
Throned on its equal throne.

IV.

North and South and East and West,
All true hearts that wish thee best
Beat one tune and own one quest,
Staunch and sure as steel.
God guard from dark disunion
Our threefold State's communion,
God save the loyal Union,
The royal Commonweal!

EAST TO WEST.

SUNSET smiles on sunrise: east and west are one,
Face to face in heaven before the sovereign sun.
From the springs of the dawn everlasting a glory renews and transfigures the west,
From the depths of the sunset a light as of morning enkindles the broad sea's breast,
And the lands and the skies and the waters are glad of the day's and the night's work done.

Child of dawn, and regent on the world-wide sea,
England smiles on Europe, fair as dawn and free.
Not the waters that gird her are purer, nor mightier the winds that her waters know.
But America, daughter and sister of England, is praised of them, far as they flow:
Atlantic responds to Pacific the praise of her days that have been and shall be.

So from England westward let the watch-word fly,
So for England eastward let the seas reply;
Praise, honour, and love everlasting be sent on the wind's wings, westward and east,
That the pride of the past and the pride of the future may mingle as friends at feast,
And the sons of the lords of the world-wide seas be one till the world's life die.

MUSIC: AN ODE.

I.

WAS it light that spake from the darkness, or music that shone from the word,
When the night was enkindled with sound of the sun or the first-born bird?
Souls enthralled and entrammelled in bondage of seasons that fall and rise,
Bound fast round with the fetters of flesh, and blinded with light that dies,
Lived not surely till music spake, and the spirit of life was heard.

II.

Music, sister of sunrise, and herald of life to be,
Smiled as dawn on the spirit of man, and the thrall was free.
Slave of nature and serf of time, the bondman of life and death,
Dumb with passionless patience that breathed but forlorn and reluctant breath,
Heard, beheld, and his soul made answer, and communed aloud with the sea.

III.

Morning spake, and he heard: and the passionate silent noon
Kept for him not silence: and soft from the mounting moon
Fell the sound of her splendour, heard as dawn's in the breathless night,
Not of men but of birds whose note bade man's soul quicken and leap to light:
And the song of it spake, and the light and the darkness of earth were as chords in tune.

INSCRIPTIONS FOR THE FOUR SIDES OF A PEDESTAL.

I.

MARLOWE, the father of the sons of song
Whose praise is England's crowning praise, above
All glories else that crown her, sweet and strong
As England, clothed with light and fire of love,
And girt with might of passion, thought, and trust,
Stands here in spirit, sleeps not here in dust.

II.

Marlowe, a star too sovereign, too superb,
To fade when heaven took fire from Shakespeare's light,
A soul that knew but song's triumphal curb
And love's triumphant bondage, holds of right
His pride of place, who first in place and time
Made England's voice as England's heart sublime.

III.

Marlowe bade England live in living song:
The light he lifted up lit Shakespeare's way:
He spake, and life sprang forth in music, strong
As fire or lightning, sweet as dawn of day.
Song was a dream where day took night to wife:
'Let there be life,' he said: and there was life.

IV.

Marlowe of all our fathers first beheld
Beyond the tidal ebb and flow of things
The tideless depth and height of souls, impelled
By thought or passion, borne on waves or wings,
Beyond all flight or sight but song's: and he
First gave our song a sound that matched our sea.

ON THE DEATH OF RICHARD BURTON.

NIGHT or light is it now, wherein
Sleeps, shut out from the wild world's din,
Wakes, alive with a life more clear,
One who found not on earth his kin?

Sleep were sweet for awhile, were dear
Surely to souls that were heartless here,
Souls that faltered and flagged and fell,
Soft of spirit and faint of cheer.

A living soul that had strength to quell
Hope the spectre and fear the spell,
Clear-eyed, content with a scorn sublime
And a faith superb, can it fare not well?

Life, the shadow of wide-winged time,
Cast from the wings that change as they climb,
Life may vanish in death, and seem
Less than the promise of last year's prime.

But not for us is the past a dream
Wherefrom, as light from a clouded stream,
Faith fades and shivers and ebbs away,
Faint as the moon if the sundawn gleam.

Faith, whose eyes in the low last ray
Watch the fire that renews the day,
Faith which lives in the living past,
Rock-rooted, swerves not as weeds that sway.

As trees that stand in the storm-wind fast
She stands, unsmitten of death's keen blast,
With strong remembrance of sunbright spring
Alive at heart to the lifeless last.

Night, she knows, may in no wise cling
To a soul that sinks not and droops not wing,
A sun that sets not in death's false night
Whose kingdom finds him not thrall but king.

Souls there are that for soul's affright
Bow down and cower in the sun's glad sight,
Clothed round with faith that is one with fear,
And dark with doubt of the live world's light.

But him we hailed from afar or near
As boldest born of the bravest here
And loved as brightest of souls that eyed
Life, time, and death with unchangeful cheer,

A wider soul than the world was wide,
Whose praise made love of him one with pride,
What part has death or has time in him,
Who rode life's lists as a god might ride?

While England sees not her old praise dim,
While still her stars through the world's night swim,
A fame outshining her Raleigh's fame,
A light that lightens her loud sea's rim,

Shall shine and sound as her sons proclaim
The pride that kindles at Burton's name.
And joy shall exalt their pride to be
The same in birth if in soul the same.

But we that yearn for a friend's face—we
Who lack the light that on earth was he—
Mourn, though the light be a quenchless flame
That shines as dawn on a tideless sea.

ELEGY.

1869–1891.

AUVERGNE, Auvergne, O wild and woful land,
O glorious land and gracious, white as gleam
The stairs of heaven, black as a flameless brand,
Strange even as life, and stranger than a dream,

Could earth remember man, whose eyes made bright
The splendour of her beauty, lit by day
Or soothed and softened and redeemed by night,
Wouldst thou not know what light has passed away?

Wouldst thou not know whom England, whom the world,
Mourns? For the world whose wildest ways he trod,
And smiled their dangers down that coiled and curled
Against him, knows him now less man than god.

Our demigod of daring, keenest-eyed
To read and deepest read in earth's dim things,
A spirit now whose body of death has died
And left it mightier yet in eyes and wings,

The sovereign seeker of the world, who now
Hath sought what world the light of death may show,
Hailed once with me the crowns that load thy brow,
Crags dark as midnight, columns bright as snow.

Thy steep small Siena, splendid and content
As shines the mightier city's Tuscan pride
Which here its face reflects in radiance, pent
By narrower bounds from towering side to side,

Set fast between the ridged and foamless waves
Of earth more fierce and fluctuant than the sea,
The fearless town of towers that hails and braves
The heights that gird, the sun that brands Le Puy;

The huddled churches clinging on the cliffs
As birds alighting might for storm's sake cling,

Moored to the rocks as tempest-harried skiffs
To perilous refuge from the loud wind's wing;

The stairs on stairs that wind and change and climb
Even up to the utmost crag's edge curved and curled,
More bright than vision, more than faith sublime,
Strange as the light and darkness of the world;

Strange as are night and morning, stars and sun,
And washed from west and east by day's deep tide,
Shine yet less fair, when all their heights are won,
Than sundawn shows thy pillared mountain-side.

Even so the dawn of death, whose light makes dim
The starry fires that life sees rise and set,
Shows higher than here he shone before us him
Whom faith forgets not, nor shall fame forget.

Even so those else unfooted heights we clomb
Through scudding mist and eddying whirls of cloud,
Blind as a pilot beaten blind with foam.
And shrouded as a corpse with storm's grey shroud,

Foot following foot along the sheer straight ledge
Where space was none to bear the wild goat's feet
Till blind we sat on the outer footless edge
Where darkling death seemed fain to share the seat,

The abyss before us, viewless even as time's,
The abyss to left of us, the abyss to right,
Bid thought now dream how high the freed soul climbs
That death sets free from change of day and night.

The might of raging mist and wind whose wrath
Shut from our eyes the narrowing rock we trod,
The wondrous world it darkened, made our path
Like theirs who take the shadow of death for God.

Yet eastward, veiled in vapour white as snow,
The grim black herbless heights that scorn the sun
And mock the face of morning rose to show
The work of earth-born fire and earthquake done.

And half the world was haggard night, wherein
We strove our blind way through: but far above
Was light that watched the wild mists whirl and spin,
And far beneath a land worth light and love.

Deep down the Valley of the Curse, undaunted
By shadow and whisper of winds with sins for wings
And ghosts of crime wherethrough the heights live haunted
By present sense of past and monstrous things,

The glimmering water holds its gracious way
Full forth, and keeps one happier hand's-breadth green
Of all that storm-scathed world whereon the sway
Sits dark as death of deadlier things unseen.

But on the soundless and the viewless river
That bears through night perchance again to day
The dead whom death and twin-born fame deliver
From life that dies, and time's inveterate sway,

No shadow save of falsehood and of fear
That brands the future with the past, and bids
The spirit wither and the soul grow sere,
Hovers or hangs to cloud life's opening lids,

If life have eyes to lift again and see,
Beyond the bounds of sensual sight or breath,
What life incognisable of ours may be
That turns our light to darkness deep as death.

Priests and the soulless serfs of priests may swarm
With vulturous acclamation, loud in lies,
About his dust while yet his dust is warm
Who mocked as sunlight mocks their base blind eyes,

Their godless ghost of godhead, false and foul
As fear his dam or hell his throne: but we,
Scarce hearing, heed no carrion church-wolf's howl:
The corpse be theirs to mock; the soul is free.

Free as ere yet its earthly day was done
It lived above the coil about us curled:
A soul whose eyes were keener than the sun,
A soul whose wings were wider than the world.

We, sons of east and west, ringed round with dreams,
Bound fast with visions, girt about with fears,
Live, trust, and think by chance, while shadow seems
Light, and the wind that wrecks a hand that steers.

He, whose full soul held east and west in poise,
Weighed man with man, and creed of man's with creed,
And age with age, their triumphs and their toys,
And found what faith may read not and may read.

Scorn deep and strong as death and life, that lit
With fire the smile at lies and dreams outworn
Wherewith he smote them, showed sublime in it
The splendour and the steadfastness of scorn.

What loftier heaven, what lordlier air, what space
Illimitable, insuperable, infinite,
Now to that strong-winged soul yields ampler place
Than passing darkness yields to passing light,

No dream, no faith can tell us: hope and fear,
Whose tongues were loud of old as children's, now
From babbling fall to silence: change is here,
And death; dark furrows drawn by time's dark plough.

Still sunward here on earth its flight was bent,
Even since the man within the child began
To yearn and kindle with superb intent
And trust in time to magnify the man.

Still toward the old garden of the Sun, whose fruit
The honey-heavy lips of Sophocles
Desired and sang, wherein the unwithering root
Sprang of all growths that thought brings forth and sees

Incarnate, bright with bloom or dense with leaf
Far-shadowing, deep as depth of dawn or night:
And all were parcel of the garnered sheaf
His strenuous spirit bound and stored aright.

And eastward now, and ever toward the dawn,
If death's deep veil by life's bright hand be rent,
We see, as through the shadow of death withdrawn,
The imperious soul's indomitable ascent.

But not the soul whose labour knew not end—
But not the swordman's hand, the crested head—
The royal heart we mourn, the faultless friend,
Burton—a name that lives till fame be dead.

A SEQUENCE OF SONNETS ON THE DEATH OF ROBERT BROWNING.

I.

THE clearest eyes in all the world they read
With sense more keen and spirit of sight more true
Than burns and thrills in sunrise, when the dew
Flames, and absorbs the glory round it shed,
As they the light of ages quick and dead,
Closed now, forsake us: yet the shaft that slew
Can slay not one of all the works we knew,
Nor death discrown that many-laurelled head.

The works of words whose life seems lightning wrought,
And moulded of unconquerable thought,
And quickened with imperishable flame,
Stand fast and shine and smile, assured that nought
May fade of all their myriad-moulded fame,
Nor England's memory clasp not Browning's name.

December 13, 1889.

II.

Death, what hast thou to do with one for whom
Time is not lord, but servant? What least part
Of all the fire that fed his living heart,
Of all the light more keen than sundawn's bloom
That lit and led his spirit, strong as doom
And bright as hope, can aught thy breath may dart
Quench? Nay, thou knowest he knew thee what thou art,
A shadow born of terror's barren womb,
That brings not forth save shadows. What art thou,
To dream, albeit thou breathe upon his brow,
That power on him is given thee,—that thy breath
Can make him less than love acclaims him now,
And hears all time sound back the word it saith?
What part hast thou then in his glory, Death?

III.

A graceless doom it seems that bids us grieve:
Venice and winter, hand in deadly hand,
Have slain the lover of her sunbright strand
And singer of a stormbright Christmas Eve.
A graceless guerdon we that loved receive
For all our love, from that the dearest land
Love worshipped ever. Blithe and soft and bland,
Too fair for storm to scathe or fire to cleave,
Shone on our dreams and memories evermore
The domes, the towers, the mountains and the shore
That gird or guard thee, Venice: cold and black
Seems now the face we loved as he of yore.
We have given thee love—no stint, no stay, no lack:
What gift, what gift is this thou hast given us back?

IV.

But he—to him, who knows what gift is thine,
Death? Hardly may we think or hope, when we
Pass likewise thither where to-night is he,
Beyond the irremeable outer seas that shine
And darken round such dreams as half divine
Some sunlit harbour in that starless sea
Where gleams no ship to windward or to lee,
To read with him the secret of thy shrine.

There too, as here, may song, delight, and love,
The nightingale, the sea-bird, and the dove,
Fulfil with joy the splendour of the sky
Till all beneath wax bright as all above:
But none of all that search the heavens, and try
The sun, may match the sovereign eagle's eye.

December 14.

V.

Among the wondrous ways of men and time
He went as one that ever found and sought
And bore in hand the lamplike spirit of thought
To illume with instance of its fire sublime
The dusk of many a cloudlike age and clime.
No spirit in shape of light and darkness wrought,
No faith, no fear, no dream, no rapture, nought
That blooms in wisdom, nought that burns in crime,
No virtue girt and armed and helmed with light,
No love more lovely than the snows are white,
No serpent sleeping in some dead soul's tomb,
No song-bird singing from some live soul's height,
But he might hear, interpret, or illume
With sense invasive as the dawn of doom.

VI.

What secret thing of splendour or of shade
Surmised in all those wandering ways wherein
Man, led of love and life and death and sin,
Strays, climbs, or cowers, allured, absorbed, afraid,
Might not the strong and sunlike sense invade
Of that full soul that had for aim to win
Light, silent over time's dark toil and din,
Life, at whose touch death fades as dead things fade?
O spirit of man, what mystery moves in thee
That he might know not of in spirit, and see
The heart within the heart that seems to strive,
The life within the life that seems to be,
And hear, through all thy storms that whirl and drive,
The living sound of all men's souls alive?

VII.

He held no dream worth waking: so he said,
He who stands now on death's triumphal steep,
Awakened out of life wherein we sleep
And dream of what he knows and sees, being dead.
But never death for him was dark or dread:
'Look forth' he bade the soul, and fear not. Weep,
All ye that trust not in his truth, and keep
Vain memory's vision of a vanished head
As all that lives of all that once was he
Save that which lightens from his word: but we,
Who, seeing the sunset-coloured waters roll,
Yet know the sun subdued not of the sea,
Nor weep nor doubt that still the spirit is whole,
And life and death but shadows of the soul.

December 15.

SUNSET AND MOONRISE.

New Year's Eve, 1889.

All the west, whereon the sunset sealed
the dead year's glorious grave
Fast with seals of light and fire and cloud
that light and fire illume,
Glows at heart and kindles earth and
heaven with joyous blush and bloom,
Warm and wide as life, and glad of death that
only slays to save.
As a tide-reconquered sea-rock lies aflush
with the influent wave
Lies the light aflush with darkness, lapped
about by lustrous gloom,
Even as life with death, and fame with
time, and memory with the tomb
Where a dead man hath for vassals Fame the
serf and Time the slave.

Far from earth as heaven, the steadfast light
withdrawn, superb, suspense,
Burns in dumb divine expansion of illimitable flower:

Moonrise whets the shadow's edges keen as noontide: hence and thence
Glows the presence from us passing, shines and passes not the power.

Souls arise whose word remembered is as spirit within the sense:
All the hours are theirs of all the seasons: death has but his hour.

BIRTHDAY ODE.

AUGUST 6, 1891.

I.

LOVE and praise, and a length of days whose shadow cast upon time is light,
Days whose sound was a spell shed round from wheeling wings as of doves in flight,
Meet in one, that the mounting sun to-day may triumph, and cast out night.

Two years more than the full fourscore lay hallowing hands on a sacred head—
Scarce one score of the perfect four uncrowned of fame as they smiled and fled:
Still and soft and alive aloft their sunlight stays though the suns be dead.

Ere we were or were thought on, ere the love that gave us to life began,
Fame grew strong with his crescent song, to greet the goal of the race they ran,
Song with fame, and the lustrous name with years whose changes acclaimed the man.

II.

Soon, ere time in the rounding rhyme of choral seasons had hailed us men,
We too heard and acclaimed the word whose breath was life upon England then—
Life more bright than the breathless light of soundless noon in a songless glen.

Ah, the joy of the heartstruck boy whose ear was opened of love to hear!
Ah, the bliss of the burning kiss of song and spirit, the mounting cheer
Lit with fire of divine desire and love that knew not if love were fear!

Fear and love as of heaven above and earth enkindled of heaven were one;
One white flame, that around his name grew keen and strong as the worldwied sun;
Awe made bright with implied delight, as weft with weft of the rainbow spun.

III.

He that fears not the voice he hears and loves shall never have heart to sing:
All the grace of the sun-god's face that bids the soul as a fountain spring
Bids the brow that receives it bow, and hail his likeness on earth as king.

We that knew when the sun's shaft flew beheld and worshipped, adored and heard:
Light rang round it of shining sound, whence all men's hearts were subdued and stirred:
Joy, love, sorrow, the day, the morrow, took life upon them in one man's word.

Not for him can the years wax dim, nor downward swerve on a darkening way:
Upward wind they, and leave behind such light as lightens the front of May:
Fair as youth and sublime as truth we find the fame that we hail to-day.

THRENODY.

OCTOBER 6, 1892.

I.

LIFE, sublime and serene when time had power upon it and ruled its breath,
Changed it, bade it be glad or sad, and hear what change in the world's ear saith,
Shines more fair in the starrier air whose glory lightens the dusk of death.

Suns that sink on the wan sea's brink, and moons that kindle and flame and fade,
Leave more clear for the darkness here the stars that set not and see not shade
Rise and rise on the lowlier skies by rule of sunlight and moonlight swayed.

So, when night for his eyes grew bright, his proud head pillowed on Shakespeare's breast,
Hand in hand with him, soon to stand where shine the glories that death loves best,
Passed the light of his face from sight, and sank sublimely to radiant rest.

II.

Far above us and all our love, beyond all reach of its voiceless praise,
Shines for ever the name that nevertshall feel the shade of the changeful days
Fall and chill the delight that still sees winter's light on it shine like May's.

Strong as death is the dark day's breath whose blast has withered the life we see
Here where light is the child of night, and less than visions or dreams are we:
Strong as death; but a word, a breath, a dream is stronger than death can be.

Strong as truth and superb in youth eternal, fair as the sundawn's flame
Seen when May on her first-born day bids earth exult in her radiant name,
Lives, clothed round with its praise and crowned with love that dies not, his love-lit fame.

III.

Fairer far than the morning star, and sweet for us as the songs that rang
Loud through heaven from the choral Seven when all the stars of the morning sang,
Shines the song that we loved so long—since first such love in us flamed and sprang.

England glows as a sunlit rose from mead to mountain, from sea to sea,
Bright with love and with pride above all taint of sorrow that needs must be,
Needs must live for an hour, and give its rainbow's glory to lawn and lea.

Not through tears shall the new-born years behold him, crowned with applause of men,
Pass at last from a lustrous past to life that lightens beyond their ken,
Glad and dead, and from earthward led to sunward, guided of Imogen.

THE BALLAD OF MELICERTES.

IN MEMORY OF THEODORE DE BANVILLE.

DEATH, a light outshining life, bids heaven resume
Star by star the souls whose light made earth divine.
Death, a night outshining day, sees burn and bloom
Flower by flower, and sun by sun, the fames that shine
Deathless, higher than life beheld their sovereign sign.

Dead Simonides of Ceos, late restored,
Given again of God, again by man deplored,
Shone but yestereve, a glory frail as breath.
Frail? But Fame's breath quickens, kindles, keeps in ward,
Life so sweet as this that dies and casts off death.

Mother's love, and rapture of the sea, whose womb
Breeds eternal life of joy that stings like brine,
Pride of song, and joy to dare the singer's doom,
Sorrow soft as sleep and laughter bright as wine,
Flushed and filled with fragrant fire his lyric line.
As the sea-shell utters, like a stricken chord,
Music uttering all the sea's within it stored,
Poet well-beloved, whose praise our sorrow saith,
So thy songs retain thy soul, and so record
Life so sweet as this that dies and casts off death.

Side by side we mourned at Gautier's golden tomb:
Here in spirit now I stand and mourn at thine.
Yet no breath of death strikes thence, no shadow of gloom,
Only light more bright than gold of the inmost mine,
Only steam of incense warm from love's own shrine.
Not the darkling stream, the sundering Stygian ford,
Not the hour that smites and severs as a sword,
Not the night subduing light that perisheth,
Smite, subdue, divide from us by doom abhorred,
Life so sweet as this that dies and casts off death.

Prince of song more sweet than honey, lyric lord,
Not thy France here only mourns a light adored,
One whose love-lit fame the world inheriteth.
Strangers too, now brethren, hail with heart's accord
Life so sweet as this that dies and casts off death.

AU TOMBEAU DE BANVILLE.

La plus douce des voix qui vibraient sous le ciel
Se tait: les rossignols ailés pleurent le frère
Qui s'envole au-dessus de l'âpre et sombre terre,
Ne lui laissant plus voir que l'être essentiel,

Esprit qui chante et rit, fleur d'une âme sans fiel.
L'ombre élyséenne, où la nuit n'est que lumière,
Revoit, tout revêtu de splendeur douce et fière,
Mélicerte, poète à la bouche de miel.

Dieux exilés, passants célestes de ce monde,
Dont on entend parfois dans notre nuit profonde
Vibrer la voix, frémir les ailes, vous savez
S'il vous aima, s'il vous pleura, lui dont la vie
Et le chant rappelaient les vôtres. Recevez
L'âme de Mélicerte affranchie et ravie.

LIGHT: AN EPICEDE.

To Philip Bourke Marston.

Love will not weep because the seal is broken
That sealed upon a life beloved and brief
Darkness, and let but song break through for token
How deep, too far for even thy song's relief,
Slept in thy soul the secret springs of grief.

Thy song may soothe full many a soul hereafter,
As tears, if tears will come, dissolve despair;
As here but late, with smile more bright than laughter,
Thy sweet strange yearning eyes would seem to bear
Witness that joy might cleave the clouds of care.

Two days agone, and love was one with pity
When love gave thought wings toward the glimmering goal
Where, as a shrine lit in some darkling city,
Shone soft the shrouded image of thy soul:
And now thou art healed of life; thou art healed, and whole.

Yea, two days since, all we that loved thee pitied:
And now with wondering love, with shame of face,
We think how foolish now, how far unfitted,
Should be from us, toward thee who hast run thy race,
Pity—toward thee, who hast won the painless place;

The painless world of death, yet unbeholden
Of eyes that dream what light now lightens thine
And will not weep. Thought, yearning toward those olden
Dear hours that sorrow sees and sees not shine,
Bows tearless down before a flameless shrine:

A flameless altar here of life and sorrow
Quenched and consumed together. These were one,
One thing for thee, as night was one with morrow
And utter darkness with the sovereign sun:
And now thou seest life, sorrow, and darkness done.

And yet love yearns again to win thee hither;
Blind love, and loveless, and unworthy thee:
Here where I watch the hours of darkness wither
Here where mine eyes were glad and sad to see
Thine that could see not mine, though turned on me.

But now, if aught beyond sweet sleep lie hidden,
And sleep be sealed not fast on dead men's sight
For ever, thine hath grace for ours forbidden,
And sees us compassed round with change and night:
Yet light like thine is ours, if love be light.

THRENODY.

Watching here alone by the fire whereat last year
Sat with me the friend that a week since yet was near,
That a week has borne so far and hid so deep,
Woe am I that I may not weep,
May not yearn to behold him here.

Shame were mine, and little the love I bore him were,
Now to mourn that better he fares than love may fare
Which desires, and would not have indeed, its will,
Would not love him so worse than ill,
Would not clothe him again with care.

Yet can love not choose but remember, hearts but ache,
Eyes but darken, only for one vain thought's poor sake,
For the thought that by this hearth's now lonely side
Two fast friends, on the day he died,
Looked once more for his hand to take.

Let thy soul forgive them, and pardon heal the sin,
Though their hearts be heavy to think what then had been,
The delight that never while they live may be—
Love's communion of speech with thee,
Soul and speech with the soul therein.

O my friend, O brother, a glory veiled and marred!
Never love made moan for a life more evil-starred.
Was it envy, chance, or chance-compelling fate,
Whence thy spirit was bruised so late,
Bowed so heavily, bound so hard?

Now released, it may be,—if only love might know—
Filled and fired with sight, it beholds us blind and low
With a pity keener yet, if that may be,
Even than ever was this that we
Felt, when love of thee wrought us woe.

None may tell the depths and the heights of life and death.
What we may we give thee: a word that sorrow saith,
And that none will heed save sorrow scarce a song.
All we may, who have loved thee long,
Take: the best we can give is breath.

A DIRGE.

A BELL tolls on in my heart
As though in my ears a knell
Had ceased for awhile to swell,
But the sense of it would not part
From the spirit that bears its part
In the chime of the soundless bell.

Ah dear dead singer of sorrow,
The burden is now not thine
That grief bade sound for a sign
Through the songs of the night whose morrow
Has risen, and I may not borrow
A beam from its radiant shrine.

The burden has dropped from thee
That grief on thy life bound fast;
The winter is over and past
Whose end thou wast fain to see.
Shall sorrow not comfort me
That is thine no longer—at last?

Good day, good night, and good morrow,
Men living and mourning say.
For thee we could only pray
That night of the day might borrow
Such comfort as dreams lend sorrow:
Death gives thee at last good day.

A REMINISCENCE.

THE rose to the wind has yielded: all its leaves
Lie strewn on the graveyard grass, and all their light
And colour and fragrance leave our sense and sight
Bereft as a man whom bitter time bereaves
Of blossom at once and hope of garnered sheaves,
Of April at once and August. Day to night
Calls wailing, and life to death, and depth to height,
And soul upon soul of man that hears and grieves.

Who knows, though he see the snow-cold blossom shed,
If haply the heart that burned within the rose,
The spirit in sense, the life of life be dead?
If haply the wind that slays with storming snows
Be one with the wind that quickens? Bow thine head,
O Sorrow, and commune with thine heart: who knows?

VIA DOLOROSA.

THE days of a man are threescore years and ten.
The days of his life were half a man's, whom we
Lament, and would yet not bid him back, to be
Partaker of all the woes and ways of men.
Life sent him enough of sorrow: not again
Would anguish of love, beholding him set free,
Bring back the beloved to suffer life and see
No light but the fire of grief that scathed him then.
We know not at all: we hope, and do not fear.
We shall not again behold him, late so near,
Who now from afar above, with eyes alight
And spirit enkindled, haply toward us here
Looks down unforgetful yet of days like night
And love that has yet his sightless face in sight.

February 15, 1887.

I.

TRANSFIGURATION.

BUT half a man's days—and his days were nights.
What hearts were ours who loved him, should we pray
That night would yield him back to darkling day,
Sweet death that soothes, to life that spoils and smites?
For now, perchance, life lovelier than the light's
That shed no comfort on his weary way
Shows him what none may dream to see or say
Ere yet the soul may scale those topless heights
Where death lies dead, and triumph. Haply there
Already may his kindling eyesight find
Faces of friends—no face than his more fair—
And first among them found of all his kind
Milton, with crowns from Eden on his hair,
And eyes that meet a brother's now not blind.

II.

DELIVERANCE.

O DEATH, fair Death, sole comforter and sweet,
Nor Love nor Hope can give such gifts as thine.
Sleep hardly shows us round thy shadowy shrine
What roses hang, what music floats, what feet
Pass and what wings of angels. We repeat
Wild words or mild, disastrous or divine,
Blind prayer, blind imprecation, seeing no sign
Nor hearing aught of thee not faint and fleet
As words of men or snowflakes on the wind.
But if we chide thee, saying 'Thou hast sinned, thou hast sinned,
Dark Death, to take so sweet a light away
As shone but late, though shadowed, in our skies,'
We hear thine answer—'Night has given what day
Denied him: darkness hath unsealed his eyes.'

III.

THANKSGIVING.

COULD love give strength to thank thee! Love can give
Strong sorrow heart to suffer: what we bear
We would not put away, albeit this were
A burden love might cast aside and live.
Love chooses rather pain than palliative,
Sharp thought than soft oblivion. May we dare
So trample down our passion and our prayer
That fain would cling round feet now fugitive
And stay them—so remember, so forget,
What joy we had who had his presence yet,
What griefs were his while joy in him was ours
And grief made weary music of his breath,
As even to hail his best and last of hours
With love grown strong enough to thank thee, Death?

IV.

LIBITINA VERTICORDIA.

SISTER of sleep, healer of life, divine
As rest and strong as very love may be,
To set the soul that love could set not free,
To bid the skies that day could bid not shine,
To give the gift that life withheld was thine.
With all my heart I loved one borne from me:
And all my heart bows down and praises thee,
Death, that hast now made grief not his but mine.

O Changer of men's hearts, we would not bid thee
Turn back our hearts from sorrow: this alone
We bid, we pray thee, from thy sovereign throne
And sanctuary sublime where heaven has hid thee,
Give: grace to know of those for whom we weep
That if they wake their life is sweet as sleep.

V.

THE ORDER OF RELEASE.

THOU canst not give it. Grace enough is ours
To know that pain for him has fallen on rest.
The worst we know was his on earth: the best,
We fain would think,—a thought no fear deflowers—
Is his, released from bonds of rayless hours.
Ah, turn our hearts from longing; bid our quest
Cease, as content with failure. This thy guest
Sleeps, vexed no more of time's imperious powers,
The spirit of hope, the spirit of change and loss,
The spirit of love bowed down beneath his cross,
Nor now needs comfort from the strength of song.
Love, should he wake, bears now no cross for him:
Dead hope, whose living eyes like his were dim,
Has brought forth better comfort, strength more strong.

VI.

PSYCHAGOGOS.

As Greece of old acclaimed thee God and man,
So, Death, our tongue acclaims thee: yet wast thou
Hailed of old Rome as Romans hail thee now,
Goddess and woman. Since the sands first ran
That told when first man's life and death began,
The shadows round thy blind ambiguous brow
Have mocked the votive plea, the pleading vow
That sought thee sorrowing, fain to bless or ban.

But stronger than a father's love is thine,
And gentler than a mother's. Lord and God,
Thy staff is surer than the wizard rod
That Hermes bare as priest before thy shrine
And herald of thy mercies. We could give
Nought, when we would have given: thou bidst him live.

VII.

THE LAST WORD.

So many a dream and hope that went and came,
So many and sweet, that love thought like to be,
Of hours as bright and soft as those for me
That made our hearts for song's sweet love the same,
Lie now struck dead, that hope seems one with shame.
O Death, thy name is Love: we know it, and see
The witness: yet for very love's sake we
Can hardly bear to mix with thine his name.

Philip, how hard it is to bid thee part
Thou knowest, if aught thou knowest where now thou art
Of us that loved and love thee. None may tell
What none but knows—how hard it is to say
The word that seals up sorrow, darkens day,
And bids fare forth the soul it bids fare well.

IN MEMORY OF AURELIO SAFFI.

THE wider world of men that is not ours
Receives a soul whose life on earth was light.
Though darkness close the date of human hours,
Love holds the spirit and sense of life in sight,
That may not, even though death bid fly, take flight.
Faith, love, and hope fulfilled with memory, see
As clear and dear as life could bid it be
The present soul that is and is not he.

He, who held up the shield and sword of Rome
Against the ravening brood of recreant France,
Beside the man of men whom heaven took home
When earth beheld the spring's first eye-beams glance
And life and winter seemed alike a trance
Eighteen years since, in sight of heaven and spring
That saw the soul above all souls take wing,
He too now hears the heaven we hear not sing.

He too now dwells where death is dead, and stands
Where souls like stars exult in life to be:
Whence all who linked heroic hearts and hands
Shine on our sight, and give it strength to see
What hope makes fair for all whom faith makes free:
Free with such freedom as we find in sleep,
The light sweet shadow of death, when dreams are deep
And high as heaven whence light and lightning leap.

And scarce a month yet gone, his living hand
Writ loving words that sealed me friend of his.
Are heaven and earth as near as sea to strand?
May life and death as bride and bridegroom kiss?
His last month's written word abides, and is;
Clear as the sun that lit through storm and strife
And darkling days when hope took fear to wife
The faith whose fire was light of all his life.

A life so fair, so pure of earthlier leaven,
That none hath won through higher and harder ways
The deathless life of death which earth calls heaven;
Heaven, and the light of love on earth, and praise
Of silent memory through subsiding days
Wherein the light subsides not whence the past
Feeds full with life the future. Time holds fast
Their names whom faith forgets not, first and last.

Forget? The dark forgets not dawn, nor we
The suns that sink to rise again, and shine
Lords of live years and ages. Earth and sea
Forget not heaven that makes them seem divine,
Though night put out their fires and bid their shrine
Be dark and pale as storm and twilight. Day,
Not night, is everlasting: life's full sway
Bids death bow down as dead, and pass away.

What part has death in souls that past all fear
Win heavenward their supernal way, and smite
With scorn sublime as heaven such dreams as here
Plague and perplex with cloud and fire the light
That leads men's waking souls from glimmering night
To the awless heights of day, whereon man's awe,
Transfigured, dies in rapture, seeing the law
Sealed of the sun that earth arising saw?

Faith, justice, mercy, love, and heaven-born hate
That sets them all on fire and bids them be
More than soft words and dreams that wake too late,
Shone living through the lordly life that we
Beheld, revered, and loved on earth, while he
Dwelt here, and bade our eyes take light thereof;
Light as from heaven that flamed or smiled above
In light or fire whose very hate was love.

No hate of man, but hate of hate whose foam
Sheds poison forth from tongues of snakes and priests,
And stains the sickening air with steams whence Rome
Now feeds not full the God that slays and feasts;
For now the fangs of all the ravenous beasts
That ramped about him, fain of prayer and prey,
Fulfil their lust no more: the tide of day
Swells, and compels him down the deathward way.

Night sucks the Church its creature down, and hell
Yawns, heaves, and yearns to clasp its loathliest child
Close to the breasts that bore it. All the spell
Whence darkness saw the dawn in heaven defiled
Is dumb as death: the lips that lied and smiled
Wax white for fear as ashes. She that bore
The banner up of darkness now no more
Sheds night and fear and shame from shore to shore.

When they that cast her kingdom down were born,
North cried on south and east made moan to west
For hopes that love had hardly heart to mourn,
For Italy that was not. Kings on quest,
By priests whose blessings turn as curses blest,
Made spoil of souls and bodies bowed and bound,
Hunted and harried, leashed as horse or hound,
And hopeless of the hope that died unfound.

And now that faith has brought forth fruit to time,
How should not memory praise their names, and hold
Their record even as Dante's life sublime,
Who bade his dream, found fair and false of old,
Live? Not till earth and heaven be dead and cold
May man forget whose work and will made one
Italy, fair as heaven or freedom won,
And left their fame to shine beside her sun.

April 1890.

THE FESTIVAL OF BEATRICE.

DANTE, sole standing on the heavenward height,
Beheld and heard one saying, 'Behold me well:
I am, I am Beatrice.' Heaven and hell
Kept silence, and the illimitable light
Of all the stars was darkness in his sight
Whose eyes beheld her eyes again, and fell
Shame-stricken. Since her soul took flight to dwell
In heaven, six hundred years have taken flight.

And now that heavenliest part of earth whereon
Shines yet their shadow as once their presence shone
To her bears witness for his sake, as he
For hers bare witness when her face was gone:
No slave, no hospice now for grief—but free
From shore to mountain and from Alp to sea.

THE MONUMENT OF GIORDANO BRUNO.

I.

Not from without us, only from within,
Comes or can ever come upon us light
Whereby the soul keeps ever truth in sight.
No truth, no strength, no comfort man may win,
No grace for guidance, no release from sin,
Save of his own soul's giving. Deep and bright
As fire enkindled in the core of night
Burns in the soul where once its fire has been
The light that leads and quickens thought, inspired
To doubt and trust and conquer. So he said
Whom Sidney, flower of England, lordliest head
Of all we love, loved: but the fates required
A sacrifice to hate and hell, ere fame
Should set with his in heaven Giordano's name.

II.

Cover thine eyes and weep, O child of hell,
Grey spouse of Satan, Church of name abhorred.
Weep, withered harlot, with thy weeping lord,
Now none will buy the heaven thou hast to sell
At price of prostituted souls, and swell
Thy loveless list of lovers. Fire and sword
No more are thine: the steel, the wheel, the cord,
The flames that rose round living limbs, and fell
In lifeless ash and ember, now no more
Approve thee godlike. Rome, redeemed at last
From all the red pollution of thy past,
Acclaims the grave bright face that smiled of yore
Even on the fire that caught it round and clomb
To cast its ashes on the face of Rome.

June 9, 1889.

LIFE IN DEATH.

He should have followed who goes forth before us,
Last born of us in life, in death first-born:
The last to lift up eyes against the morn,
The first to see the sunset. Life, that bore us
Perchance for death to comfort and restore us,
Of him hath left us here awhile forlorn,
For him is as a garment overworn,
And time and change, with suns and stars in chorus,
Silent. But if, beyond all change or time,
A law more just, more equal, more sublime
Than sways the surge of life's loud sterile sea
Sways that still world whose peace environs him,
Where death lies dead as night when stars wax dim,
Above all thought or hope of ours is he.

August 2, 1891.

EPICEDE.

As a vesture shalt thou change them, said the prophet,
And the raiment that was flesh is turned to dust;
Dust and flesh and dust again the likeness of it,
And the fine gold woven and worn of youth is rust.
Hours that wax and wane salute the shade and scoff it,
That it knows not aught it doth nor aught it must:
Day by day the speeding soul makes haste to doff it,
Night by night the pride of life resigns its trust.

Sleep, whose silent notes of song loud life's derange not,
Takes the trust in hand awhile as angels may:
Joy with wings that rest not, grief with wings that range not,
Guard the gates of sleep and waking, gold or grey.
Joys that joys estrange, and griefs that griefs estrange not,
Day that yearns for night, and night that yearns for day,
As a vesture shalt thou change them, and they change not,
Seeing that change may never change or pass away.

Life of death makes question, 'What art thou that changest?
What am I, that fear should trust or faith should doubt?
I that lighten, thou that darkenest and estrangest,
Is it night or day that girds us round about?
Light and darkness on the ways wherein thou rangest
Seen as one, and beams as clouds they put to rout.
Strange is hope, but fear of all things born were strangest,
Seeing that none may strive with change to cast it out.

'Change alone stands fast, thou sayest, O death: I know not:
What art thou, my brother death, that thou shouldst know?
Men may reap no fruits of fields wherein they sow not;
Hope or fear is all the seed we have to sow.
Winter seals the sacred springs up that they flow not:
Wind and sun and change unbind them, and they flow.
Am I thou or art thou I? The years that show not
Pass, and leave no sign when time shall be to show.'

Hope makes suit to faith lest fear give ear to sorrow:
Doubt strews dust upon his head, and goes his way.
All the golden hope that life of death would borrow,
How, if death require again, may life repay?
Earth endures no darkness whence no light yearns thorough;
God in man as light in darkness lives, they say:
Yet, would midnight take assurance of the morrow,
Who shall pledge the faith or seal the bond of day?

Darkness, mute or loud with music or with mourning,
Starry darkness, winged with wind or clothed with calm,
Dreams no dream of grief or fear or wrath or warning,
Bears no sign of race or goal or strife or palm.
Word of blessing, word of mocking or of scorning,
Knows it none, nor whence its breath sheds blight or balm.
Yet a little while, and hark, the psalm of morning:
Yet a little while, and silence takes the psalm.

All the comfort, all the worship, all the wonder,
All the light of love that darkness holds in fee,

All the song that silence keeps or keeps not under,
Night, the soul that knows gives thanks for all to thee.
Far beyond the gates that morning strikes in sunder,
Hopes that grief makes holy, dreams that fear sets free,
Far above the throne of thought, the lair of thunder,
Silent shines the word whose utterance fills the sea.

MEMORIAL VERSES ON THE DEATH OF WILLIAM BELL SCOTT.

A LIFE more bright than the sun's face, bowed
Through stress of season and coil of cloud,
Sets: and the sorrow that casts out fear
Scarce deems him dead in his chill shroud,

Dead on the breast of the dying year,
Poet and painter and friend, thrice dear
For love of the suns long set, for love
Of song that sets not with sunset here,

For love of the fervent heart, above
Their sense who saw not the swift light move
That filled with sense of the loud sun's lyre
The thoughts that passion was fain to prove

In fervent labour of high desire
And faith that leapt from its own quenched pyre
Alive and strong as the sun, and caught
From darkness light, and from twilight fire.

Passion, deep as the depths unsought
Whence faith's own hope may redeem us nought,
Filled full with ardour of pain sublime
His mourning song and his mounting thought.

Elate with sense of a sterner time,
His hand's flight clomb as a bird's might climb
Calvary: dark in the darkling air
That shrank for fear of the crowning crime,

Three crosses rose on the hillside bare,
Shown scarce by grace of the lightning's glare
That clove the veil of the temple through
And smote the priests on the threshold there.

The soul that saw it, the hand that drew,
Whence light as thought's or as faith's glance flew,
And stung to life the sepulchral past,
And bade the stars of t burn anew,

Held no less than the dead world fast
The light live shadows about them cast,
The likeness living of dawn and night,
The days that pass and the dreams that last.

Thought, clothed round with sorrow as light,
Dark as a cloud that the moon turns bright,
Moved, as a wind on the striving sea,
That yearns and quickens and flags in flight,

Through forms of colour and song that he
Who fain would have set his wide wings free
Cast round it, clothing or chaining hope
With lights that last not and shades that flee.

Scarce in song could his soul find scope,
Scarce the strength of his hand might ope
Art's inmost gate of her sovereign shrine,
To cope with heaven as a man may cope.

But high as the hope of a man may shine
The faith, the fervour, the life divine
That thrills our life and transfigures, rose
And shone resurgent, a sunbright sign,

Through shapes whereunder the strong soul glows
And fills them full as a sunlit rose
With sense and fervour of life, whose light
The fool's eye knows not, the man's eye knows.

None that can read or divine aright
The scriptures writ of the soul may slight
The strife of a strenuous soul to show
More than the craft of the hand may write.

None may slight it, and none may know
How high the flames that aspire and glow
From heart and spirit and soul may climb
And triumph; higher than the souls lie low

Whose hearing hears not the livelong rhyme,
Whose eyesight sees not the light sublime,
That shines, that sounds, that ascends and lives
Unquenched of change, unobscured of time.

A long life's length, as a man's life gives
Space for the spirit that soars and strives
To strive and soar, has the soul shone through
That heeds not whither the world's wind drives

Now that the days and the ways it knew
Are strange, are dead as the dawn's grey dew
At high midnoon of the mounting day
That mocks the might of the dawn it slew.

Yet haply may not—and haply may—
No sense abide of the dead sun's ray
Wherein the soul that outsoars us now
Rejoiced with ours in its radiant sway.

Hope may hover, and doubt may bow,
Dreaming. Haply—they dream not how—
Not life but death may indeed be dead
When silence darkens the dead man's brow.

Hope, whose name is remembrance, fed
With love that lightens from seasons fled,
Dreams, and craves not indeed to know,
That death and life are as souls that wed.

But change that falls on the heart like snow
Can chill not memory nor hope, that show
The soul, the spirit, the heart and head,
Alive above us who strive below.

AN OLD SAYING.

MANY waters cannot quench love,
Neither can the floods drown it.
Who shall snare or slay the white dove
Faith, whose very dreams crown it,
Gird it round with grace and peace, deep,
Warm, and pure, and soft as sweet sleep?
Many waters cannot quench love,
Neither can the floods drown it.

Set me as a seal upon thine heart,
As a seal upon thine arm.
How should we behold the days depart
And the nights resign their charm?
Love is as the soul: though hate and fear
Waste and overthrow, they strike not here.
Set me as a seal upon thine heart,
As a seal upon thine arm.

A MOSS-ROSE.

IF the rose of all flowers be the rarest
That heaven may adore from above,
And the fervent moss-rose be the fairest
That sweetens the summer with love,

Can it be that a fairer than any
Should blossom afar from the tree?
Yet one, and a symbol of many,
Shone sudden for eyes that could see.

In the grime and the gloom of November
The bliss and the bloom of July
Bade autumn rejoice and remember
The balm of the blossoms gone by.

Would you know what moss-rose now it may be
That puts all the rest to the blush,
The flower was the face of a baby,
The moss was a bonnet of plush.

TO A CAT.

I.

STATELY, kindly, lordly friend,
Condescend
Here to sit by me, and turn
Glorious eyes that smile and burn,
Golden eyes, love's lustrous meed,
On the golden page I read.

All your wondrous wealth of hair,
Dark and fair,
Silken-shaggy, soft and bright
As the clouds and beams of night,
Pays my reverent hand's caress
Back with friendlier gentleness.

Dogs may fawn on all and some
As they come;
You, a friend of loftier mind,
Answer friends alone in kind.
Just your foot upon my hand
Softly bids it understand.

Morning round this silent sweet
Garden-seat
Sheds its wealth of gathering light,
Thrills the gradual clouds with might,
Changes woodland, orchard, heath,
Lawn, and garden there beneath.

Fair and dim they gleamed below:
Now they glow
Deep as even your sunbright eyes,
Fair as even the wakening skies.
Can it not or can it be
Now that you give thanks to see?

May not you rejoice as I,
Seeing the sky
Change to heaven revealed, and bid
Earth reveal the heaven it hid
All night long from stars and moon,
Now the sun sets all in tune?

What within you wakes with day
Who can say?
All too little may we tell,
Friends who like each other well,
What might haply, if we might,
Bid us read our lives aright.

II.

Wild on woodland ways your sires
Flashed like fires;
Fair as flame and fierce and fleet
As with wings on wingless feet
Shone and sprang your mother, free,
Bright and brave as wind or sea.

Free and proud and glad as they,
Here to-day
Rests or roams their radiant child,
Vanquished not, but reconciled,
Free from curb or aught above
Save the lovely curb of love.

Love through dreams of souls divine
Fain would shine
Round a dawn whose light and song
Then should right our mutual wrong—
Speak, and seal the love-lit law
Sweet Assisi's seer foresaw.

Dreams were theirs; yet haply may
Dawn a day
When such friends and fellows born,
Seeing our earth as fair at morn,
May for wiser love's sake see
More of heaven's deep heart than we.

HAWTHORN DYKE.

ALL the golden air is full of balm and bloom
Where the hawthorns line the shelving dyke with flowers.
Joyous children born of April's happiest hours,
High and low they laugh and lighten, knowing their doom
Bright as brief—to bless and cheer they know not whom,
Heed not how, but washed and warmed with suns and showers
Smile, and bid the sweet soft gradual banks and bowers
Thrill with love of sunlit fire or starry gloom.

All our moors and lawns all round rejoice; but here
All the rapturous resurrection of the year
Finds the radiant utterance perfect, sees the word
Spoken, hears the light that speaks it. Far and near,
All the world is heaven: and man and flower and bird
Here are one at heart with all things seen and heard.

THE BROTHERS.

THERE were twa brethren fell on strife;
Sweet fruits are sair to gather:
The tane has reft his brother of life;
And the wind wears owre the heather.

There were twa brethren fell to fray;
Sweet fruits are sair to gather:
The tane is clad in a cloak of clay;
And the wind wears owre the heather.

O loud and loud was the live man's cry,
(Sweet fruits are sair to gather)
Would God the dead and the slain were I!'
And the wind wears owre the heather.

O sair was the wrang and sair the fray,'
(Sweet fruits are sair to gather)
But liefer had love be slain than slay.'
And the wind wears owre the heather.

O sweet is the life that sleeps at hame,'
(Sweet fruits are sair to gather)
But I maun wake on a far sea's faem.'
And the wind wears owre the heather.

'And women are fairest of a' things fair,'
(Sweet fruits are sair to gather)
But never shall I kiss woman mair.'
And the wind wears owre the heather.

Between the birk and the aik and the thorn
(Sweet fruits are sair to gather)
He's laid his brother to lie forlorn:
And the wind wears owre the heather.

Between the bent and the burn and the broom
(Sweet fruits are sair to gather)
He's laid him to sleep till dawn of doom:
And the wind wears owre the heather.

He's tane him owre the waters wide,
(Sweet fruits are sair to gather)
Afar to fleet and afar to bide:
And the wind wears owre the heather.

His hair was yellow, his cheek was red,
(Sweet fruits are sair to gather)
When he set his face to the wind and fled:
And the wind wears owre the heather.

His banes were stark and his een were bright
(Sweet fruits are sair to gather)
When he set his face to the sea by night.
And the wind wears owre the heather.

His cheek was wan and his hair was grey
(Sweets fruits are sair to gather)
When he came back hame frae the wide world's way:
And the wind wears owre the heather.

His banes were weary, his een were dim,
(Sweet fruits are sair to gather)
And nae man lived and had mind of him:
And the wind wears owre the heather.

'O whatten a wreck wad they seek on land'
(Sweet fruits are sair to gather)
'That they houk the turf to the seaward hand?'
And the wind wears owre the heather.

'O whatten a prey wad they think to take'
(Sweet fruits are sair to gather)
'That they delve the dykes for a dead man's sake?'
And the wind wears owre the heather.

A bane of the dead in his hand he's tane;
Sweet fruits are sair to gather:
And the red blood brak frae the dead white bane.
And the wind wears owre the heather.

He's cast it forth of his auld faint hand;
  Sweet fruits are sair to gather:
And the red blood ran on the wan wet sand.
  And the wind wears owre the heather.

'O whatten a slayer is this,' they said,
  (Sweet fruits are sair to gather)
That the straik of his hand should raise his dead?'
  And the wind wears owre the heather.

'O weel is me for the sign I take'
  (Sweet fruits are sair to gather)
'That now I may die for my auld sin's sake.'
  And the wind wears owre the heather.

'For the dead was in wait now fifty year,'
  (Sweet fruits are sair to gather)
'And now shall I die for his blood's sake here.'
  And the wind wears owre the heather.

JACOBITE SONG.

Now who will speak, and lie not,
  And pledge not life, but give?
Slaves herd with herded cattle:
The dawn grows bright for battle,
And if we die, we die not;
  And if we live, we live.

The faith our fathers fought for,
  The kings our fathers knew,
We fight but as they fought for:
We seek the goal they sought for,
  The chance they hailed and knew,
The praise they strove and wrought for,
  To leave their blood as dew
  On fields that flower anew.

Men live that serve the stranger;
  Hounds live that huntsmen tame:
These life-days of our living
Are days of God's good giving
Where death smiles soft on danger
  And life scowls dark on shame.

And what would you do other,
  Sweet wife, if you were I?
And how should you be other,
My sister, than your brother,
  If you were man as I,
Born of our sire and mother,
  With choice to cower and fly,
  And chance to strike and die?

No churl's our oldworld name is,
  The lands we leave are fair:
But fairer far than these are,
But wide as all the seas are,
But high as heaven the fame is
  That if we die we share.

Our name the night may swallow,
  Our lands the churl may take:
But night nor death may swallow,
Nor hell's nor heaven's dim hollow,
  The star whose height we take,
The star whose light we follow
  For faith's unfaltering sake
  Till hope that sleeps awake.

Soft hope's light lure we serve not,
  Nor follow, fain to find:
Dark time's last word may smite her
Dead, ere man's falsehood blight her
But though she die, we swerve not,
  Who cast not eye behind.

Faith speaks when hope dissembles:
  Faith lives when hope lies dead:
If death as life dissembles,
And all that night assembles
  Of stars at dawn lie dead,
Faint hope that smiles and trembles
  May tell not well for dread:
  But faith has heard it said.

Now who will fight, and fly not,
  And grudge not life to give?
And who will strike beside us,
If life's or death's light guide us?
For if we live, we die not,
  And if we die, we live.

THE BALLAD OF DEAD MEN'S BAY.

THE sea swings owre the slants of sand,
All white with winds that drive
The sea swirls up to the still dim strand,
Where nae man comes alive.

At the grey soft edge of the fruitless surf
A light flame sinks and springs;
At the grey soft rim of the flowerless turf
A low flame leaps and clings.

What light is this on a sunless shore,
What gleam on a starless sea?
Was it earth's or hell's waste womb that bore
Such births as should not be?

As lithe snakes turning, as bright stars burning,
They bicker and beckon and call;
As wild waves churning, as wild winds yearning,
They flicker and climb and fall.

A soft strange cry from the landward rings—
'What ails the sea to shine?'
A keen sweet note from the spray's rim springs—
'What fires are these of thine?'

A soul am I that was born on earth
For ae day's waesome span:
Death bound me fast on the bourn of birth
Ere I were christened man.

'A light by night, I fleet and fare
Till the day of wrath and woe;
On the hems of earth and the skirts of air
Winds hurl me to and fro.'

'O well is thee, though the weird be strange
That bids thee flit and flee;
For hope is child of the womb of change,
And hope keeps watch with thee.

'When the years are gone, and the time is come
God's grace may give thee grace;
And thy soul may sing, though thy soul were dumb
And shine before God's face.

'But I, that lighten and revel and roll
With the foam of the plunging sea,
No sign is mine of a breathing soul
That God should pity me.

'Nor death, nor heaven, nor hell, nor birth
Hath part in me nor mine:
Strong lords are these of the living earth
And loveless lords of thine.

'But I that know nor lord nor life
More sure than storm or spray,
Whose breath is made of sport and strife,
Whereon shall I find stay?'

'And wouldst thou change thy doom with me,
Full fain with thee would I:
For the life that lightens and lifts the sea
Is more than earth or sky.

'And what if the day of doubt and doom
Shall save nor smite not me?
I would not rise from the slain world's tomb
If there be no more sea.

'Take he my soul that gave my soul,
And give it thee to keep;
And me, while seas and stars shall roll
Thy life that falls on sleep.'

That word went up through the mirk mid sky,
And even to God's own ear:
And the Lord was ware of the keen twin cry,
And wroth was he to hear.

He's tane the soul of the unsained child
That fled to death from birth;
He's tane the light of the wan sea wild,
And bid it burn on earth.

He's given the ghaist of the babe new-born
The gift of the water-sprite,
To ride on revel from morn to morn
And roll from night to night.

He's given the sprite of the wild wan sea
The gift of the new-born man,
A soul for ever to bide and be
When the years have filled their span.

When a year was gone and a year was come,
O loud and loud cried they—
'For the lee-lang year thou hast held us dumb
Take now thy gifts away!'

O loud and lang they cried on him,
And sair and sair they prayed:
'Is the face of thy grace as the night's face grim
For those thy wrath has made?'

A cry more bitter than tears of men
From the rim of the dim grey sea;—
'Give me my living soul again,
The soul thou gavest me,
The doom and the dole of kindly men,
To bide my weird and be!'

A cry more keen from the wild low land
Than the wail of waves that roll;—
'Take back the gift of a loveless hand,
Thy gift of doom and dole,
The weird of men that bide on land;
Take from me, take my soul!'

The hands that smite are the hands tha spare;
They build and break the tomb;
They turn to darkness and dust and air
The fruits of the waste earth's womb;
But never the gift of a granted prayer,
The dole of a spoken doom.

Winds may change at a word unheard,
But none may change the tides:
The prayer once heard is as God's own word;
The doom once dealt abides.

And ever a cry goes up by day,
And ever a wail by night;
And nae ship comes by the weary bay
But her shipmen hear them wail and pray,
And see with earthly sight
The twofold flames of the twin lights play
Where the sea-banks green and the sea-floods grey
Are proud of peril and fain of prey,
And the sand quakes ever; and ill fare they
That look upon that light.

DEDICATION.

1893.

THE sea of the years that endure not
Whose tide shall endure till we die
And know what the seasons assure not,
If death be or life be a lie,
Sways hither the spirit and thither,
A waif in the swing of the sea
Whose wrecks are of memories that wither
As leaves of a tree.

We hear not and hail not with greeting
The sound of the wings of the years,
The storm of the sound of them beating,
That none till it pass from him hears:
But tempest nor calm can imperil
The treasures that fade not or fly;
Change bids them not change and be sterile,
Death bids them not die.

Hearts plighted in youth to the royal
High service of hope and of song,
Sealed fast for endurance as loyal,
And proved of the years as they throng,
Conceive not, believe not, and fear not
That age may be other than youth;
That faith and that friendship may hear not
And utter not truth.

Not yesterday's light nor to-morrow's
Gleams nearer or clearer than gleams,
Though joys be forgotten and sorrows
Forgotten as changes of dreams,
The dawn of the days unforgotten
That noon could eclipse not or slay,
Whose fruits were as children begotten
Of dawn upon day.

The years that were flowerful and fruitless,
The years that were fruitful and dark,
The hopes that were radiant and rootless,
The hopes that were winged for their mark,
Lie soft in the sepulchres fashioned
Of hours that arise and subside,
Absorbed and subdued and impassioned,
In pain or in pride.

But far in the night that entombs them
The starshine as sunshine is strong,
And clear through the cloud that resumes them
Remembrance, a light and a song,
Rings lustrous as music and hovers
As birds that impend on the sea,
And thoughts that their prison-house covers
Arise and are free.

Forgetfulness deep as a prison
Holds days that are dead for us fast
Till the sepulchre sees rearisen
The spirit whose reign is the past,
Disentrammelled of darkness, and kindled
With life that is mightier than death,
When the life that obscured it has dwindled
And passed as a breath.

But time nor oblivion may darken
Remembrance whose name will be joy
While memory forgets not to hearken,
While manhood forgets not the boy
Who heard and exulted in hearing
The songs of the sunrise of youth
Ring radiant above him, unfearing
And joyous as truth.

Truth, winged and enkindled with rapture
And sense of the radiance of yore,
Fulfilled you with power to recapture
What never might singer before—
The life, the delight, and the sorrow
Of troublous and chivalrous years
That knew not of night or of morrow,
Of hopes or of fears.

But wider the wing and the vision
That quicken the spirit have spread
Since memory beheld with derision
Man's hope to be more than his dead.
From the mists and the snows and the thunders
Your spirit has brought for us forth
Light, music, and joy in the wonders
And charms of the north.

The wars and the woes and the glories
That quicken and lighten and rain
From the clouds of its chronicled stories,
The passion, the pride, and the pain,
Whose echoes were mute and the token
Was lost of the spells that they spake,
Rise bright at your bidding, unbroken
Of ages that break.

For you, and for none of us other,
Time is not: the dead that must live
Hold commune with you as a brother
By grace of the life that you give.
The heart that was in them is in you,
Their soul in your spirit endures:
The strength of their song is the sinew
Of this that is yours.

Hence is it that life, everlasting
As light and as music, abides
In the sound of the surge of it, casting
Sound back to the surge of the tides,
Till sons of the sons of the Norsemen
Watch, hurtling to windward and lee,
Round England, unbacked of her horsemen,
The steeds of the sea.

SPECIMENS OF MODERN POETS

THE HEPTALOGIA

OR

THE SEVEN AGAINST SENSE

A CAP WITH SEVEN BELLS

PREFACE

To the collector of First Editions The Heptalogia has long been known as one of the less accessible volumes issued anonymously by Mr. Swinburne. In Mr. Thomas J. Wise's bibliography of the poet the facts are stated with sufficient clearness: it is also made evident that the work is destined by its author to remain *introuvable*.

That a series of such inimitable parodies should be forever restricted to a few undaunted bibliophiles would seem a woeful injustice to every outstanding lover of Letters. The sum total of first rate parody has never run to excess in English literature. *John Jones* is without doubt the choicest example of literary banter in the language.

We have added *Disgust: A Dramatic Monologue*. This is now reprinted from *The Fortnightly Review*, December 1, 1881. It parodies Lord Tennyson's *Despair: A Dramatic Monologue*, which had appeared in *The Nineteenth Century* for November, 1881.

The following is a list of the seven parodies, with the names of the poets to whom they severally apply:

I. The Higher Pantheism in a Nutshell ..... Alfred Tennyson.
II. John Jones ..... Robert Browning.
III. The Poet and the Woodlouse ..... Walt. Whitman.
IV. The Person of the House (Idyl ccclxvi) ..... Coventry Patmore.
V. Last Words of a Seventh-rate Poet ..... Robert, Lord Lytton ("*Owen Meredith*").
VI. Sonnet for a Picture ..... Dante Gabriel Rossetti.
VII. Nephelidia ..... Algernon Charles Swinburne.

THE HIGHER PANTHEISM IN A NUTSHELL.

One, who is not, we see: but one, whom we see not, is:
Surely this is not that: but that is assuredly this.

What, and wherefore, and whence? for under is over and under:
If thunder could be without lightning, lightning could be without thunder.

Doubt is faith in the main: but faith, on the whole, is doubt:
We cannot believe by proof: but could we believe without?

Why, and whither, and how? for barley and rye are not clover:
Neither are straight lines curves: yet over is under and over.

Two and two may be four: but four and four are not eight:
Fate and God may be twain: but God is the same thing as fate.

Ask a man what he thinks, and get from a man what he feels:
God, once caught in the fact, shews you a fair pair of heels.

Body and spirit are twins: God only knows which is which:
The soul squats down in the flesh, like a tinker drunk in a ditch.

One and two are not one: but one and nothing is two:
Truth can hardly be false, if falsehood cannot be true.

Once the mastodon was: pterodactyls were common as cocks:
Then the mammoth was God: now is He a prize ox.

Parallels all things are: yet many of these are askew:
You are certainly I: but certainly I am not you.

Springs the rock from the plain, shoots the stream from the rock:
Cocks exist for the hen: but hens exist for the cock.

God, whom we see not, is: and God, who is not, we see:
Fiddle, we know, is diddle: and diddle, we take it, is dee.

JOHN JONES.

I.

AT THE PIANO.

I.

Love me and leave me; what love bids retrieve me? can June's fist grasp May?
Leave me and love me; hopes eyed once above me like spring's sprouts, decay;
Fall as the snow falls, when summer leaves grow false—cards packed for storm's play!

II.

Nay, say Decay's self be but last May's elf, wing shifted, eye sheathed—
Changeling in April's crib rocked, who lets 'scape rills locked fast since frost breathed—
Skin cast (think!) adder-like, now bloom bursts bladder-like,—bloom frost bequeathed?

III.

Ah, how can fear sit and hear as love hears it grief's heart's cracked grate's screech?
Chance lets the gate sway that opens on hate's way and shews on shame's beach
Crouched like an imp sly change watch sweet love's shrimps lie, a toothful in each.

IV.

Time feels his tooth slip on husks wet from Truth's lip, which drops them and grins—
Shells where no throb stirs of life left in lobsters since joy thrilled their fins—

Hues of the prawn's tail or comb that makes
dawn stale,[1] so red for our sins!

V.

Years blind and deaf use the soul's joys as
refuse, heart's peace as manure,
Reared whence, next June's rose shall bloom
where our moons rose last year, just as
pure:
Moons' ends match roses' ends: men by
beasts' noses' ends mete sin's stink's cure.

VI.

Leaves love last year smelt now feel dead
love's tears melt—flies caught in time's
mesh!
Salt are the dews in which new time breeds
new sin, brews blood and stews flesh;
Next year may see dead more germs than this
weeded and reared them afresh.

VII.

Old times left perish, there's new time to
cherish; life just shifts its tune;
As, when the day dies, earth, half afraid, eyes
the growth of the moon;
Love me and save me, take me or waive me;
death takes one so soon!

II.

BY THE CLIFF.

I.

Is it daytime (guess),
You that feed my soul
To excess
With that light in those eyes
And those curls drawn like a scroll
In that round grave guise?
No or yes?

II.

Oh, the end, I'd say!
Such a foolish thing
(Pure girls' play!)
As a mere mute heart,
Was it worth a kiss, a ring,
This? for two must part—
Not to-day.

III.

Look, the whole sand crawls,
Hums, a heaving hive,
Scrapes and scrawls—
Such a buzz and burst!
Here just one thing's not alive,
One that was at first—
But life palls.

IV.

Yes, my heart, I know,
Just my heart's stone dead—
Yes, just so.
Sick with heat, those worms
Drop down scorched and overfed—
No more need of germs!
Let them go.

V.

Yes, but you now, look,
You, the rouged stage female
With a crook,
Chalked Arcadian sham,
You that made my soul's sleep's dream ail—
Your soul fit to damn?
Shut the book.

III.

ON THE SANDS.

I.

THERE was nothing at all in the case (con-
ceive)
But love; being love, it was not (under-
stand)
Such a thing as the years let fall (believe)
Like the rope's coil dropt from a fisher-
man's hand
When the boat's hauled up—"by your leave!"

II.

So—well! How that crab writhes—leg after
leg
Drawn, as a worm draws ring upon
ring
Gradually, not gladly! Nay, but, Meg,
Is it more than the ransom (say) of a
king
(Take my meaning at least) that I beg?

[1] 'Whose youth and freshness
Wrinkles Apollo's, and makes stale the morning.'—SHAKESPEARE.

III.

Not so! You were ready to learn, I think,
What the world said! 'He loves you too well (suppose)
For such leanings! These poets, their love's mere ink—
Like a flower, their flame flashes—a rose-bud, blows—
Then it all drops down at a wink!

IV.

'Ah, the instance! A curl of a blossomless vine
The vinedresser passing it sickens to see
And mutters "Much hope (under God) of His wine
From the branch and the bark of a barren tree
Spring reared not, and winter lets pine—

V.

' "His wine that should glorify (saith He) the cup
That a man beholding (not tasting) might say
'Pour out life at a draught, drain it dry, drink it up.
Give this one thing, and huddle the rest away—
Save the bitch, and who cares for the pup?'

VI.

' "Let it rot then!" which saying, he leaves it —we'll guess,
Feels (if the sap move at all) thus much—
Yearns, and would blossom, would quicken no less,
Bud at an eye's glance, flower at a touch—
"Die, perhaps, would you not, for her?—
"Yes

VII.

'Note the hitch there! That's piteous—so much being done,
(He'll think some day, your lover) so little to do!
Such infinite days to wear out, once begun!
Since the hand its glove holds, and the foot-sole its shoe—
Overhead too there's always the sun!'

VIII.

Oh, no doubt they had said so, your friends—been profuse
Of good counsel, wise hints—'where the trap lurks, walk warily—
Squeeze the fruit to the core ere you count on the juice!
For the graft may fail, shift, wax, change colour, wane, vary, lie—'
You were cautious, God knows—to what use?

IX.

This crab's wiser, it strikes me—no twist but implies life—
Not a curl but's so fit you could find none fitter—
For the brute from its brutehood looks up thus and eyes life—
Stoop your soul down and listen, you'll hear it twitter,
Laughing lightly,—my crab's life's the wise life!

X.

Ah, now, look you—tail foremost, the beast sets seaward—
The sea draws it, sand sucks it—he's wise, my crab!
From the napkin out jumps his one talent—good steward,
Just judge! So a man shirks the smile or the stab,
And sets his sail duly to leeward!

XI.

Trust me? Hardly! I bid you not lean (remark)
On my spirit, your spirit—my flesh, your flesh—
Hold my hand, and tread safe through the horrible dark—
Quench my soul as with sprinklings of snow, then refresh
With some blast of new bellows the spark!

XII.

By no means! This were easy (men tell me) to say—
'Give her all, throw your chance up, fall back on her heart!'

(Say my friends) 'she must change! after night follows day—'
No such fool! I am safe set in hell, for my part—
So let heaven do the worst now he may!

XIII.

What they bid me? Well, this, nothing more —'Tell her this—
"You are mine, I yours, though the whole world fail—
Though things are not, I know there is one thing which is—
Though the oars break, there's hope for us yet—hoist the sail!
Oh, your heart! what's the heart? but your kiss!"

XIV.

'Then she breaks, she drops down, she lies flat at your feet—
Take her then!' Well, I knew it—what fools are men!
Take the bee by her horns, will your honey prove sweet?
Sweet is grass—will you pasture your cows in a fen?
Oh, if contraries could but once meet!

XV.

Love you call it? Some twitch in the moon's face (observe)
Wet blink of her eyelid, tear dropt about dewfall,
Cheek flushed or obscured—does it make the sky swerve?
Fetch the test, work the question to rags, bring to proof all—
Find what souls want and bodies deserve!

XVI.

Ah, we know you! Your soul works to infinite ends,
Frets, uses life up for death's sake, takes pains,
Flings down love's self—'but you, bear me witness, my friends!
Have I lost spring? count up (see) the winter's fresh gains!
Is the shrub spoilt? the pine's hair impends!'

XVII.

What, you'd say—'Mark how God works! Years crowd, time wears thin,
Earth keeps good yet, the sun goes on, stars hold their own,
And you'll change, climb past sight of the world, shift your skin,
Never heeding how life moans—more flesh now, less bone!"
For that cheek's worn waste outline (death's grin)

XVIII.

Pleads with time still—"what good if I lose this? but see—" '
(There's the crab gone!) '"I said, 'Though earth sinks,' " ' (you perceive?
Ah, true, back there!) your soul now—' " 'yet some vein might be
(Could one find it alive in the heart's core's pulse, cleave
Through the life-springs where 'you' melts in 'me')—

XIX.

' " 'Some true vein of the absolute soul, which survives
All that flesh runs to waste through'—and lo, this fails!
Here's death close on us! One life? a million of lives!
Why choose one sail to watch of these infinite sails?
Time's a tennis-play! thank you, no, fives!

XX.

'"Stop life's ball then!" Such folly! melt earth down for that,
Till the pure ore eludes you and leaves you raw scoriæ?
Pish, the vein's wrong!' But you, friends—come, what were you at
When God spat you out suddenly? what was the story He
Cut short thus, the growth He laid flat?

XXI.

Wait! the crab's twice alive, mark! Oh, worthy, your soul,
Of strange ends, great results, novel labours! Take note,

I reject this for one! (ay, now, straight to the hole!
Safe in sand there—your skirts smooth out all as they float!)
I, shirk drinking through flaws in the bowl?

XXII.

Or suppose now that rock's cleft—grim, scored to the quick,
As a man's face kept fighting all life through gets scored,
Mossed and marked with grey purulent leprosies, sick,
Flat and foul as man's life here (be swift with your sword—
Cut the soul out, stuck fast where thorns prick!)

XXIII.

—Say it let the rock's heart out, its meaning, the thing
All was made for, devised, ruled out gradually, planned—
Ah, that sea-shell, perhaps—since it lies, such a ring
Of pure colour, a cup full of sunbeams, to stand
(Say, in Lent) at the priest's hand—(no king!)

XXIV.

Blame the cleft then? Praise rather! So—just a chance gone!
Had you said—'Save the seed and secure souls in flower'—
Ah, how time laughs, years palpitate, pro grapples con,
Till one day you shrug shoulders—'Well, gone, the good hour!
Till one night—'Is God off now? or on?

IV.

UP THE SPOUT.

I.

Hi! Just you drop that! Stop, I say!
Shirk work, think slink off, twist friend's wrist?
Where that spined sand's lined band's the bay—
Lined blind with true sea's blue, as due—
Promising—not to pay?

II.

For the sea's debt leaves wet the sand;
Burst worst fate's weights in one burst gun?
A man's own yacht, blown—What? off land?
Tack back, or veer round here, then—queer!
Reef points, though—understand?

III.

I'm blest if I do. Sigh? be blowed!
Love's doves make break life's ropes, eh? Tropes!
Faith's brig, baulked, sides caulked, rides at road;
Hope's gropes befogged, storm-dogged and bogged—
Clogged, water-logged, her load!

IV.

Stowed, by Jove, right and tight, away!
No show now how best plough sea's brow,
Wrinkling—breeze quick, tease thick, ere day,
Clear sheer wave's sheen of green, I mean,
With twinkling wrinkles—eh?

V.

Sea sprinkles winkles, tinkles light
Shells' bells—boy's joys that hap to snap!
It's just sea's fun, breeze done, to spite
God's rods that scourge her surge, I'd urge—
Not proper, is it—quite?

VI.

See, fore and aft, life's craft undone!
Crank plank, split spritsail—mark, sea's lark!
That grey cold sea's old sprees, begun
When men lay dark i' the ark, no spark,
All water—just God's fun!

VII.

Not bright, at best, his jest to these
Seemed—screamed, shrieked, wreaked on kin for sin!
When for mirth's yell earth's knell seemed please
Some dumb new grim great whim in him
Made Jews take chalk for cheese.

VIII.

Could God's rods bruise God's Jews? Their jowls
Bobbed, sobbed, gaped, aped the plaice in face:
None heard, 'tis odds, his—God's—folk's howls.
Now, how must I apply, to try
This hookiest-beaked of owls?

IX.

Well, I suppose God knows—I don't.
Time's crimes mark dark men's types, in stripes
Broad as fen's lands men's hands were wont
Leave grieve unploughed, though proud and loud
With birds' words—No! he won't!

X.

One never should think good impossible.
Eh? say I'd hide this Jew's oil's cruse—
His shop might hold bright gold, engrossible
By spy—spring's air takes there no care
To wave the heath-flower's glossy bell!

XI.

But gold bells chime in time there, coined—
Gold! Old Sphinx winks there—'Read my screed!'
Doctrine Jews learn, use, burn for, joined
(Through new craft's stealth) with health and wealth—
At once all three purloined!

XII.

I rose with dawn, to pawn, no doubt,
(Miss this chance, glance untried aside?)
John's shirt, my—no! Ay, so—the lout!
Let yet the door gape, store on floor
And not a soul about?

XIII.

Such men lay traps, perhaps—and I'm
Weak—meek—mild—child of woe, you know!
But theft, I doubt, my lout calls crime.
Shrink? Think! Love's dawn in pawn—you spawn
Of Jewry! Just in time!

V.

OFF THE PIER.

I.

One last glance at these sands and stones!
Time goes past men, and lives to his liking,
Steals, and ruins, and sometimes atones.
Why should he be king, though, and why not I king?
There now, that wind, like a swarm of sick drones!

II.

Is it heaven or mere earth (come!) that moves so and moans?
Oh, I knew, when you loved me, my soul was in flowerage—
Now the frost comes; from prime, though, I watched through to nones,
Read love's litanies over—his age was not our age!
No more flutes in this world for me now, dear! trombones.

III.

All that youth once denied and made mouths at, age owns.
Facts put fangs out and bite us; life stings and grows viperous;
And times fugues are a hubbub of meaningless tones.
Once we followed the piper; now why not the piper us?
Love, grown grey, plays mere solos; we want antiphones.

IV.

And we sharpen our wits up with passions for hones,
Melt down loadstars for magnets, use women for whetstones,
Learn to bear with dead calms by remembering cyclones,
Snap strings short with sharp thumbnails, till silence begets tones,
Burn our souls out, shift spirits, turn skins and change zones;

V.

Then the heart, when all's done with, wakes, whimpers, intones
Some lost fragment of tune it thought sweet ere it grew sick;

(Is it life that disclaims this, or death that disowns?)
Mere dead metal, scrawled bars—ah, one touch, you make music!
Love's worth saving, youth doubts, but experience depones.

VI.

Think, what use, when youth's saddle galls bay's back or roan's,
To seek chords on love's keys to strike, other than his chords?
There's an error joy winks at and grief half condones,
Or life's counterpoint grates the C major of discords—
'Tis man's choice 'twixt sluts rose-crowned and queens age dethrones.

VII.

I for instance might groan as a bag-pipe groans,
Give the flesh of my heart for sharp sorrows to flagellate,
Grief might grind my cheeks down, age make sticks of my bones,
(Though a queen drowned in tears must be worth more than Madge elate)[1]
Rose might turn burdock, and pine-apples cones;

VIII.

My skin might change to a pitiful crone's,
My lips to a lizard's, my hair to weed,
My features, in fact, to a series of loans;
Thus much is conceded; now, you, concede
You would hardly salute me by choice, John Jones?

[1] First edition :—

And my face bear his brand—mine, that once bore Love's badge elate!

THE POET AND THE WOODLOUSE.

SAID a poet to a woodlouse—'Thou art certainly my brother;
I discern in thee the markings of the fingers of the Whole;
And I recognize, in spite of all the terrene smut and smother,
In the colours shaded off thee, the suggestions of a soul.

'Yea,' the poet said, 'I smell thee by some passive divination,
I am satisfied with insight of the measure of thine house;
What had happened I conjecture, in a blank and rhythmic passion,
Had the æons thought of making thee a man, and me a louse.

The broad lives of upper planets, their absorption and digestion,
Food and famine, health and sickness, I can scrutinize and test;
Through a shiver of the senses comes a resonance of question,
And by proof of balanced answer I decide that I am best

'Man the fleshly marvel, always feels a certain kind of awe stick
To the skirts of contemplation, cramped with nympholeptic weight:
Feels his faint sense charred and branded by the touch of solar caustic,
On the forehead of his spirit feels the footprint of a Fate.'

'Notwithstanding which, O poet,' spake the woodlouse, very blandly,
'I am likewise the created,—I the equipoise of thee;
I the particle, the atom, I behold on either hand lie
The inane of measured ages that were embryos of me.

'I am fed with intimations, I am clothed with consequences,
And the air I breathe is coloured with apocalyptic blush:
Ripest-budded odours blossom out of dim chaotic stenches,
And the Soul plants spirit-lilies in sick leagues of human slush.

'I am thrilled half cosmically through by cryptophantic surgings,
Till the rhythmic hills roar silent through a spongious kind of blee:
And earth's soul yawns disembowelled of her pancreatic organs,
Like a madrepore if mesmerized, in rapt catalepsy.

'And I sacrifice, a Levite—and I palpitate, a poet;—
Can I close dead ears against the rush and resonance of things?
Symbols in me breathe and flicker up the heights of the heroic;
Earth's worst spawn, you said, and cursed me? look! approve me! I have wings.

'Ah, men's poets! men's conventions crust you round and swathe you mist-like,
And the world's wheels grind your spirits down the dust ye overtrod:
We stand sinlessly stark-naked in effulgence of the Christlight,
And our polecat chokes not cherubs; and our skunk smells sweet to God.

'For He grasps the pale Created by some thousand vital handles,
Till a Godshine, bluely winnowed through the sieve of thunder-storms,
Shimmers up the non-existent round the churning feet of angels;
And the atoms of that glory may be seraphs, being worms.

'Friends, your nature underlies us and your pulses overplay us;
Ye, with social sores unbandaged, can ye sing right and steer wrong?
For the transient cosmic, rooted in imperishable chaos,
Must be kneaded into drastics as material for a song.

'Eyes once purged from homebred vapours through humanitarian passion
See that monochrome a despot through a democratic prism;
Hands that rip the soul up, reeking from divine evisceration,
Not with priestlike oil anoint him, but a stronger-smelling chrism.

'Pass, O poet, retransfigured! God, the psychometric rhapsode,
Fills with fiery rhythms the silence, stings the dark with stars that blink;
All eternities hang round him like an old man's clothes collapsèd,
While he makes his mundane music—AND HE WILL NOT STOP, I THINK.'

THE PERSON OF THE HOUSE.

IDYL CCCLXVI.

THE ACCOMPANIMENTS.

1. THE MONTHLY NURSE.
2. THE CAUDLE.
3. THE SENTENCES.

THE KID.

1. THE MONTHLY NURSE.

THE sickly airs had died of damp;
Through huddling leaves the holy chime
Flagged; I, expecting Mrs. Gamp,
Thought—'Will the woman come in time?'

Upstairs I knew the matron bed
Held her whose name confirms all joy
To me; and tremblingly I said
'Ah! will it be a girl or boy?'
And, soothed, my fluttering doubts began
To sift the pleasantness of things;
Developing the unshapen man,
An eagle baffled of his wings;
Considering, next, how fair the state
And large the license that sublimes
A nineteenth-century female fate—
Sweet cause that thralls my liberal rhymes!
And Chastities and colder Shames,
Decorums mute and marvellous,
And fair Behaviour that reclaims
All fancies grown erroneous,

Moved round me musing, till my choice
  Faltered. A female in a wig
Stood by me, and a drouthy voice
  Announced her—Mrs. Betsy Prig.

2. THE CAUDLE.

SWEET Love that sways the reeling years,
  The crown and chief of certitudes,
For whose calm eyes and modest ears
  Time writes the rule and text of prudes—
That, surpliced, stoops a nuptial head
  Nor chooses to live blindly free,
But, with all pulses quieted,
  Plays tunes of domesticity—
That Love I sing of and have sung
  And mean to sing till Death yawn sheer,
He rules the music of my tongue,
  Stills it or quickens there or here.
I say but this: as we went up
  I heard the Monthly give a sniff
And '*if* the big dog makes the pup—'
  She murmured—then repeated 'if!'
The caudle on a slab was placed;
  She snuffed it, snorting loud and long;
I fled—I would not stop to taste—
  And dreamed all night of things gone wrong.

3. THE SENTENCES.

I.

ABORTIVE Love is half a sin;
  But Love's abortions dearer far
Than wheels without an axle-pin
  Or life without a married star.

II.

My rules are hard to understand
  For him whom sensual rules depress;
A bandbox in a midwife's hand
  May hold a costlier bridal dress.

III.

I like her not; in fact I loathe;
  Bugs hath she brought from London beds.'
Friend! wouldst thou rather bear their growth
  Or have a baby with two heads?

IDYL CCCLXVI.

THE KID.

MY spirit, in the doorway's pause,
  Fluttered with fancies in my breast;
Obsequious to all decent laws,
  I felt exceedingly distressed.
I knew it rude to enter there
  With Mrs. V. in such a state;
And, 'neath a magisterial air,
  Felt actually indelicate.
I knew the nurse began to grin;
  I turned to greet my Love. Said she—
'Confound your modesty, come in!
  —What shall we call the darling, V.?'
(There are so many charming names!
  Girls'—Peg, Moll, Doll, Fan, Kate
    Blanche, Bab:
Boys'—Mahershahal-hashbaz, James,
  Kit, Nick, Dick, Mark, Aminadab.)
Lo, as the acorn to the oak,
  As well-heads to the river's height,
As to the chicken the moist yolk,
  As to high noon the day's first white—
Such is the baby to the man.
  There, straddling one red arm and leg,
Lay my last work, in length a span,
  Half hatched, and conscious of the egg.
A creditable child, I hoped;
  And half a score of joys to be
Through sunny lengths of prospects oped
  Smooth to the bland futurity.
O, fate surpassing other dooms,
  O, hope above all wrecks of time!
O, light that fills all vanquished glooms,
  O, silent song o'ermastering rhyme!
I covered either little foot,
  I drew the strings about its waist;
Pink as the unshell'd inner fruit,
  But barely decent, hardly chaste,
Its nudity had startled me;
  But when the petticoats were on,
'I know,' I said; 'its name shall be
  Paul Cyril Athanasius John.'
'Why,' said my wife, 'the child's a girl.'
  My brain swooned, sick with failing sense;
With all perception in a whirl,
  How could I tell the difference?
'Nay,' smiled the nurse, 'the child's a
    boy.'
  And all my soul was soothed to hear
That so it was: then startled Joy
  Mocked Sorrow with a doubtful tear.
And I was glad as one who sees
  For sensual optics things unmeet:
As purity makes passion freeze,
  So faith warns science off her beat.
Blessed are they that have not seen,
  And yet, not seeing, have believed:
To walk by faith, as preached the Dean,
  And not by sight, have I achieved.

Let love, that does not look, believe;
  Let knowledge, that believes not, look:
Truth pins her trust on falsehood's sleeve,
  While reason blunders by the book.

Then Mrs. Prig addressed me thus;
  'Sir, if you'll be advised by me,
You'll leave the blessed babe to us;
  It's my belief he wants his tea.'

LAST WORDS OF A SEVENTH-RATE POET.

BILL, I feel far from quite right—if not further: already the pill
Seems, if I may say so, to bubble inside me. A poet's heart, Bill,
Is a sort of a thing that is made of the tenderest young bloom on a fruit.
You may pass me the mixture at once, if you please—and I'll thank you to boot
For that poem—and then for the julep. This really is damnable stuff!
(Not the poem, of course.) Do you snivel, old friend? well, it's nasty enough,
But I think I can stand it—I think so—ay, Bill, and I could were it worse.
But I'll tell you a thing that I can't and I won't. 'Tis the old, old curse—
The gall of the gold-fruited Eden, the lure of the angels that fell.
'Tis the core of the fruit snake-spotted in the hush of the shadows of hell,
Where a lost man sits with his head drawn down, and a weight on his eyes.
You know what I mean, Bill—the tender and delicate mother of lies,
Woman, the devil's first cousin—no doubt by the female side.
The breath of her mouth still moves in my hair, and I know that she lied,
And I feel her, Bill, sir, inside me—she operates there like a drug.
Were it better to live like a beetle, to wear the cast clothes of a slug,
Be the louse in the locks of the hangman, the mote in the eye of the bat,
Than to live and believe in a woman, who must one day grow aged and fat?
You must see it's preposterous, Bill, sir. And yet, how the thought of it clings!
I have lived out my time—I have prigged lots of verse—I have kissed (ah, that stings!)
Lips that swore I had cribbed every line that I wrote on them—cribbed—honour bright!
Then I loathed her; but now I forgive her; perhaps after all she was right.
Yet I swear it was shameful—unwomanly, Bill, sir—to say that I fibbed.
Why, the poems were mine, for I bought them in print. Cribbed? of course they were cribbed.
Yet I wouldn't say, cribbed from the French—Lady Bathsheba thought it was vulgar—
But picked up on the banks of the Don, from the lips of a highly intelligent Bulgar.
I'm aware, Bill, that's out of all metre—I can't help it—I'm none of your sort
Who set metres, by Jove, above morals—not exactly. They don't go to Court—
As I mentioned one night to that cowslip-faced pet, Lady Rahab Redrabbit
(Whom the Marquis calls Drabby for short). Well, I say, if you want a thing, grab it—
That's what I did, at least, when I took that *danseuse* to a swell *cabaret*,
Where expense was no consideration. A poet, you see, now and then must be gay.
(I declined to give more, I remember, than fifty centeems to the waiter;
For I asked him if that was enough; and the jackanapes answered—*Peut-être.*
Ah, it isn't in you to draw up a *menu* such as ours was, though humble:
When I told Lady Shoreditch, she thought it a regular *grand tout ensemble.*)
She danced the heart out of my body—I can see in the glare of the lights,
I can see her again as I saw her that evening, in spangles and tights.
When I spoke to her first, her eye flashed so, I heard—as I fancied—the spark whiz
From her eyelid—I said so next day to that jealous old fool of a Marquis.
She reminded me, Bill, of a lovely volcano, whose entrails are lava—
Or (you know my *penchant* for original types) of the upas in Java.
In the curve of her sensitive nose was a singular species of dimple,

Where the flush was the mark of an angel's creased kiss—if it wasn't a pimple.
Now I'm none of your bashful John Bulls who don't know a pilau from a puggaree
Nor a chili, by George, from a chopstick. So, sir, I marched into her snuggery,
And proposed a light supper by way of a finish. I treated her, Bill,
To six *entrées* of ortolans, sprats, maraschino, and oysters. It made her quite ill.
Of which moment of sickness I took some advantage. I held her like this,
And availed myself, sir, of her sneezing, to shut up her lips with a kiss.
The waiters, I saw, were quite struck; and I felt, I may say, *entre nous*
Like Don Juan, Lauzun, Almaviva, Lord Byron, and old Richelieu.
(You'll observe, Bill, that rhyme's quite Parisian; a Londoner, sir, would have cited old Q.)
These are moments that thrill the whole spirit with spasms that excite and exalt.
I stood more than the peer of the great Casanova—you know—de Seingalt.
She was worth, sir, I say it without hesitation, two brace of her sisters.
Ah, why should all honey turn rhubarb—all cherries grow onions—all kisses leave blisters?
Oh, and why should I ask myself questions? I've heard such before—once or twice.
Ah, I can't understand it—but, O, I imagine it strikes me as nice.
There's a deity shapes us our ends, sir, roughhew them, my boy, how we will—
As I stated myself in a poem I published last year, you know, Bill—
Where I mentioned that that was the question—to be, or, by Jove, not to be.
Ah, it's something—you'll think so hereafter—to wait on a poet like me.
Had I written no more than those verses on that Countess I used to call Pussy—
Yes, Minette or Manon—and—you'll hardly believe it—she said they were all out of Musset.
Now I don't say they weren't—but what then? and I don't say they were—I'll bet pounds against pennies on
The subject—I wish I may never die Laureate, if some of them weren't out of Tennyson.
And I think—I don't like to be certain, with Death, so to speak, by me, frowning—
But I think there were some—say a dozen, perhaps, or a score—out of Browning.
As for poets who go on a contrary tack to what I go and you go—
You remember my lyrics *translated*—like 'sweet bully Bottom'—from Hugo?
Though I will say it's curious that simply on just that account there should be
Men so bold as to say that not one of my poems was written by me.
It would stir the political bile or the physical spleen of a drab or a Tory
To hear critics assign to his hand the Confessional, Bill, and the Laboratory.
Yes, it's singular—nay, I can't think of a parallel (ain't it a high lark?
As that Countess would say)—there are few men believe it was I wrote the Ode to a Skylark.
And it often has given myself and Lord Albert no end of diversion
To hear fellows maintain to my face it was Wordsworth who wrote the Excursion.
When they know that whole reams of the verses recur in my authorized works
Here and there, up and down! Why such readers are infidels—heretics—Turks.
And the pitiful critics who think in their paltry presumption to pay me a
Pretty compliment, pairing me off, sir, with Keats—as if *he* could write Lamia!
While I never produced a more characteristic and exquisite book,
One that gave me more real satisfaction, than did, on the whole, Lalla Rookh.
Was it there that I called on all debtors, being pestered myself by a creditor, (he
Isn't paid yet) to rise, by the proud appellation of bondsmen—hereditary?
Yes—I think so. And yet, on my word, I can't think why I think it was so.
It more probably was in the poem I made a few seasons ago
On that Duchess—her name now? ah, thus one outlives a whole cycle of joys!
Fair supplants black as brown succeeds golden. The poem made rather a noise.
And indeed I have seen worse verses; but as for the woman, my friend—
Though his neck had been never so stiff, she'd have made a philosopher bend.

As the broken heart of a sunset that bleeds
pure purple and gold
In the shudder and swoon of the sickness of
colour, the agonies old
That engirdle the brows of the day when he
sinks with a spasm into rest
And the splash of his kingly blood is dashed
on the skirts of the west,
Even such was my own, when I felt how
much sharper than any snake's tooth
Was the passion that made me mistake Lady
Eve for her niece Lady Ruth.
The whole world, colourless, lapsed. Earth
fled from my feet like a dream,
And the whirl of the walls of Space was about
me, and moved as a stream
Flowing and ebbing and flowing all night to
a weary tune
('Such as that of my verses'? Get out!) in
the face of a sick-souled moon.
The keen stars kindled and faded and fled,
and the wind in my ears
Was the wail of a poet for failure—you
needn't come snivelling tears
And spoiling the mixture, confound you, with
dropping your tears into that!
I know I'm pathetic—I must be—and you
soft-hearted and fat,
And I'm grateful of course for your kind-
ness—there, don't come hugging me,
now—
But because a fellow's pathetic, you needn't
low like a cow.

I should like—on my soul, I should like—
to remember—but somehow I can't—
If the lady whose love has reduced me to this
was the niece or the aunt.
But whichever it was, I feel sure, when I
published my lays of last year
(You remember their title—The Tramp—
only seven-and-sixpence—not dear),
I sent her a copy (perhaps her tears fell on
the title-page—yes—
I should like to imagine she wept)—and the
Bride of Bulgaria (MS.)
I forwarded with it. The lyrics, no doubt,
she found bitter—and sweet;
But the Bride she rejected, you know, with
expressions I will not repeat.
Well—she did no more than all publishers
did. Though my prospects were marred,
I can pity and pardon them. Blindness, mere
blindness! And yet it was hard.

For a poet, Bill, is a blossom—a bird—a
billow—a breeze—
A kind of creature that moves among men as
a wind among trees.
I with the heat of my heart still burning
against all bars
As the fire of the dawn, so to speak, in the
blanched blank brows of the stars—
I with my tremulous lips made pale by musi-
cal breath—
I with the shade in my eyes that was left by
the kisses of death—
(For Death came near me in youth, and
touched my face with his face,
And put in my lips the songs that belong to
a desolate place—
Desolate truly, my heart and my life, till her
kiss filled them up!)
I with my soul like wine poured out with my
flesh for the cup—
It was hard for me—it was hard—Bill, Bill,
you great owl, was it not?
For the day creeps in like a Fate: and I
think my grand passion is rot:
And I dreamily seem to perceive, by the light
of a life's dream done,
The lotion at six, and the mixture at ten, and
the draught before one.

Yes—I feel rather better. Man's life is a
mull, at the best;
And the patent perturbator pills are like
bullets of lead in my chest.
When a man's whole spirit is like the lost
Pleiad, a blown-out star,
Is there comfort in Holloway, Bill? is there
hope of salvation in Parr?
True, most things work to their end—and an
end that the shroud overlaps.
Under lace, under silk, under gold, sir, the
skirt of a winding-sheet flaps—
Which explains, if you think of it, Bill,
why I can't, though my soul thereon
broodeth,
Quite make out if I loved Lady Tamar as
much as I loved Lady Judith.
Yet her dress was of violet velvet, her hair was
hyacinth-hued,
And her ankles—no matter. A face where
the music of every mood
Was touched by the tremulous fingers of pas
sionate feeling, and made
Strange melodies, scornful, but sweeter than
strings whereon sorrow has played

To enrapture the hearing of mirth when his garland of blossom and green
Turns to lead on the anguished forehead—'you don't understand what I mean'?
Well, of course I knew you were stupid—you always were stupid at school—
Now don't say you weren't—but I'm hanged if I thought you were quite such a fool!
You don't see the point of all this? I was talking of sickness and death—
In that poem I made years ago, I said this—'Love, the flower-time whose breath
Smells sweet through a summer of kisses and perfumes an autumn of tears
Is sadder at root than a winter—its hopes heavy-hearted like fears.
Though I love your Grace more than I love little Letty, the maid of the mill,
Yet the heat of your lips when I kiss them' (you see we were intimate, Bill)
'And the beat of the delicate blood in your eyelids of azure and white
Leave the taste of the grave in my mouth and the shadow of death on my sight.
Fill the cup—twine the chaplet—come into the garden—get out of the house—
Drink to *me* with your eyes—there's a banquet behind, where worms only carouse!
As I said to sweet Katie, who lived by the brook on the land Philip farmed—
Worms shall graze where my kisses found pasture!' The Duchess, I may say, was charmed.
It was read to the Duke, and he cried like a child. If you'll give me a pill,
I'll go on till past midnight. That poem was said to be—Somebody's, Bill.
But you see you can always be sure of my hand as the mother that bore me
By the fact that I never write verse which has never been written before me.
Other poets—I blush for them, Bill—may adore and repudiate in turn a
Libitina, perhaps, or Pandemos; my Venus, you know, is Laverna.
Nay, that epic of mine which begins from foundations the Bible is built on—
'Of man's *first* disobedience'—I've heard it attributed, dammy, to Milton.
Well, it's lucky for them that it's not worth my while, as I may say, to break spears
With the hirelings, forsooth, of the press who assert that Othello was Shakespeare's.
When he that can run, sir, may read—if he borrows the book, or goes on tick—
In my poems the bit that described how the Hellespont joins the Propontic.
There are men, I believe, who will tell you that Gray wrote the whole of The Bard—
Or that I didn't write half the Elegy, Bill, in a Country Churchyard.
When you know that my poem, The Poet, begins—'Ruin seize thee!' and ends
With recapitulations of horrors the poet invokes on his friends.
And I'll swear, if you look at the dirge on my relatives under the turf, you
Will perceive it winds up with some lines on myself—and begins with the curfew.
Now you'll grant it's more probable, Bill—as a man of the world, if you please—
That all these should have prigged from myself than that I should have prigged from all these.
I could cry when I think of it, friend, if such tears would comport with my dignity,
That the author of Christabel ever should smart from such vulgar malignity.
(You remember perhaps that was one of the first little things that I carrolled
After finishing Marmion, the Princess, the Song of the Shirt, and Childe Harold.)
Oh, doubtless it always has been so—Ah, doubtless it always will be—
There are men who would say that myself is a different person from me.
Better the porridge of patience a poor man snuffs in his plate
Than the water of poisonous laurels distilled by the fingers of hate.

'Tis a dark-purple sort of a moonlighted kind of a midnight, I know;
You remember those verses I wrote on Irene, from Edgar A. Poe?
It was Lady Aholibah Levison, daughter of old Lord St. Giles,
Who inspired those delectable strains, and rewarded her bard with her smiles.
I recited her charms, in conjunction with those of a girl at the *café*,
In a poem I published in collaboration with Templeton (Taffy).
There are prudes in a world full of envy—and some of them thought it too strong

To compare an earl's daughter by name with
a girl at a French *restaurant*.
I regarded her, though, with the chivalrous
eyes of a knight-errant on quest;
I may say I don't know that I ever felt
prouder, old friend, of a conquest.
And when *I've* been made happy, I never
have cared a brass farthing who knew
it; I
Thank my stars I'm as free from mock-
modesty, friend, as from vulgar fatuity.

You may see by my shortness of speech
that my time's almost up: I perceive
That my new-fangled brevity strikes you: but
don't—though the public will—grieve.
As it's sometimes my whim to be vulgar, it's
sometimes my whim to be brief;
As when once I observed, after Heine, that
'she was a harlot, and I' (which is true)
'was a thief.'
(Though you hardly should cite this particu-
lar line, by the way, as an instance of
absolute brevity:
I'm aware, man, of that; so you needn't dis-
grace yourself, sir, by such grossly mis-
timed and impertinent levity.)
I don't like to break off, any more than you
wish me to stop: but my fate is
Not to write half a million such rhymes with-
out blockheads exclaiming—

JAM SATIS.

SONNET FOR A PICTURE.

THAT nose is out of drawing. With a gasp,
She pants upon the passionate lips that ache
With the red drain of her own mouth,
and make
A monochord of colour. Like an asp,
One lithe lock wriggles in his rutilant grasp.
Her bosom is an oven of myrrh, to bake
Love's white warm shewbread to a browner
cake.
The lock his fingers clench has burst its
hasp.
The legs are absolutely abominable.
Ah! what keen overgust of wild-eyed woes
Flags in that bosom, flushes in that nose?
Nay! Death sets riddles for desire to spell,
Responsive. What red hem earth's passion
sews,
But may be ravenously unripped in hell?

NEPHELIDIA.

FROM the depth of the dreamy decline of the
dawn through a notable nimbus of nebu-
lous noonshine,
Pallid and pink as the palm of the flag-
flower that flickers with fear of the flies
as they float,
Are they looks of our lovers that lustrously
lean from a marvel of mystic miraculous
moonshine,
These that we feel in the blood of our
blushes that thicken and threaten with
throbs through the throat?
Thicken and thrill as a theatre thronged at
appeal of an actor's appalled agitation,
Fainter with fear of the fires of the future
than pale with the promise of pride in the
past;
Flushed with the famishing fullness of fever
that reddens with radiance of rathe rec-
reation,
Gaunt as the ghastliest of glimpses that
gleam through the gloom of the gloam-
ing when ghosts go aghast?
Nay, for the nick of the tick of the time is
a tremulous touch on the temples of
terror,
Strained as the sinews yet strenuous with
strife of the dead who is dumb as the
dust-heaps of death:
Surely no soul is it, sweet as the spasm of
erotic emotional exquisite error,
Bathed in the balms of beatified bliss,
beatific itself by beatitude's breath.
Surely no spirit or sense of a soul that was
soft to the spirit and soul of our senses
Sweetens the stress of suspiring suspicion
that sobs in the semblance and sound of
a sigh;
Only this oracle opens Olympian, in mystical
moods and triangular tenses—

'Life is the lust of a lamp for the light that is
dark till the dawn of the daywhen we die.'
Mild is the mirk and monotonous music of
memory, melodiously mute as it may be,
While the hope in the heart of a hero is
bruised by the breach of men's rapiers,
resigned to the rod;
Made meek as a mother whose bosom-beats
bound with the bliss-bringing bulk of a
balm-breathing baby,
As they grope through the grave-yard of
creeds, under skies growing green at a
groan for the grimness of God.
Blank is the book of his bounty beholden
of old, and its binding is blacker than
biuer:
Out of blue into black is the scheme of the
skies, and their dews are the wine of the
bloodshed of things;
Till the darkling desire of delight shall be
free as a fawn that is freed from the fangs
that pursue her,
Till the heart-beats of hell shall be hushed
by a hymn from the hunt that has har-
ried the kennel of kings.

DISGUST.

A DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE.

A woman and her husband, having been converted from free thought to Calvinism, and being utterly miserable in consequence, resolve to end themselves by poison. The man dies, but the woman is rescued by application of the stomach-pump.

I.

PILLS? talk to me of your pills? Well, that, I
must say, is cool.
Can't bring my old man round? he was al-
ways a stubborn old fool.
If I hadn't taken precautions—a warning to
all that wive—
He might not have been dead, and I might
not have been alive.

II.

You would like to know, if I please, how it
was that our troubles began?
You see, we were brought up Agnostics, I
and my poor old man.
And we got some idea of selection and evolu-
tion, you know—
Professor Huxley's doing—where does he ex-
pect to go!

III.

Well, then came trouble on trouble on trouble
—I may say, a peck—
And his cousin was wanted one day on the
charge of forging a cheque—
And his puppy died of the mange—my parrot
choked on its perch.
This was the consequence, was it, of not going
weekly to church?

IV.

So we felt that the best if not only thing that
remained to be done
On an earth everlastingly moving about a
perpetual sun,
Where worms breed worms to be eaten of
worms that have eaten their betters—
And reviewers are barely civil—and people
get spiteful letters—
And a famous man is forgot ere the minute
hand can tick nine—
Was to send in our P. P. C., and purchase a
package of strychnine.

V.

Nay—but first we thought it was rational—
only fair—
To give both parties a hearing—and went to
the meeting-house there,
At the curve of the street that runs from the
Stag to the old Blue Lion.
"Little Zion" they call it—a deal more
"little" than "Zion."

VI.

And the preacher preached from the text,
"Come out of her." Hadn't we
come?
And we thought of the Shepherd in Pickwick
—and fancied a flavour of rum
Balmily borne on the wind of his words—and
my man said, "Well,
Let's get out of this, my dear—for his text has
a brimstone smell."

VII.

So we went, O God, out of chapel—and gazed, ah God, at the sea.
And I said nothing to him. And he said nothing to me.

VIII.

And there, you see, was an end of it all. It was obvious, in fact,
That, whether or not you believe in the doctrine taught in a tract,
Life was not in the least worth living. Because, don't you see?
Nothing that can't be, can, and what must be, must. Q. E. D.
And the infinitesimal sources of Infinite Unideality
Curve in to the central abyss of a sort of a queer Personality
Whose refraction is felt in the nebulæ strewn in the pathway of Mars
Like the parings of nails Æonian—clippings and snippings of stars—
Shavings of suns that revolve and evolve and involve—and at times
Give a sweet astronomical twang to remarkably hobbling rhymes.

IX.

And the sea curved in with a moan—and we thought how once—before
We fell out with those atheist lecturers—once, ah, once and no more,
We read together, while midnight blazed like the Yankee flag,
A reverend gentleman's work—the Conversion of Colonel Quagg.
And out of its pages we gathered this lesson of doctrine pure—
Zephaniah Stockdolloger's gospel—a word that deserves to endure
Infinite millions on millions of infinite Æons to come—
"Vocation," says he, "is vocation, and duty duty. Some."

X.

And duty, said I, distinctly points out—and vocation, said he,
Demands as distinctly—that I should kill you, and that you should kill me.
The reason is obvious—we cannot exist without creeds—who can?
So we went to the chemist's—a highly respectable church-going man—
And bought two packets of poison. You wouldn't have done so Wait.
It's evident, Providence is not with you, ma'am, the same thing as Fate.
Unconscious cerebration educes God from a fog,
But spell God backwards, what then? Give it up? the answer is, dog.
(I don't exactly see how this last verse is to scan,
But that's a consideration I leave to the secular man.)

XI.

I meant of course to go with him—as far as I pleased—but first
To see how my old man liked it—I thought perhaps he might burst.
I didn't wish it—but still it's a blessed release for a wife—
And he saw that I thought so—and grinned in derision—and threatened my life
If I made wry faces—and so I took just a sip—and he—
Well—you know how it ended—he didn't get over me.

XII.

Terrible, isn't it? Still, on reflection, it might have been worse.
He might have been the unhappy survivor, and followed my hearse.
"Never do it again"? Why, certainly not. You don't
Suppose I should think of it, surely? But anyhow—there—I won't.

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